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Iran, Worse And Worse—*The Editors*

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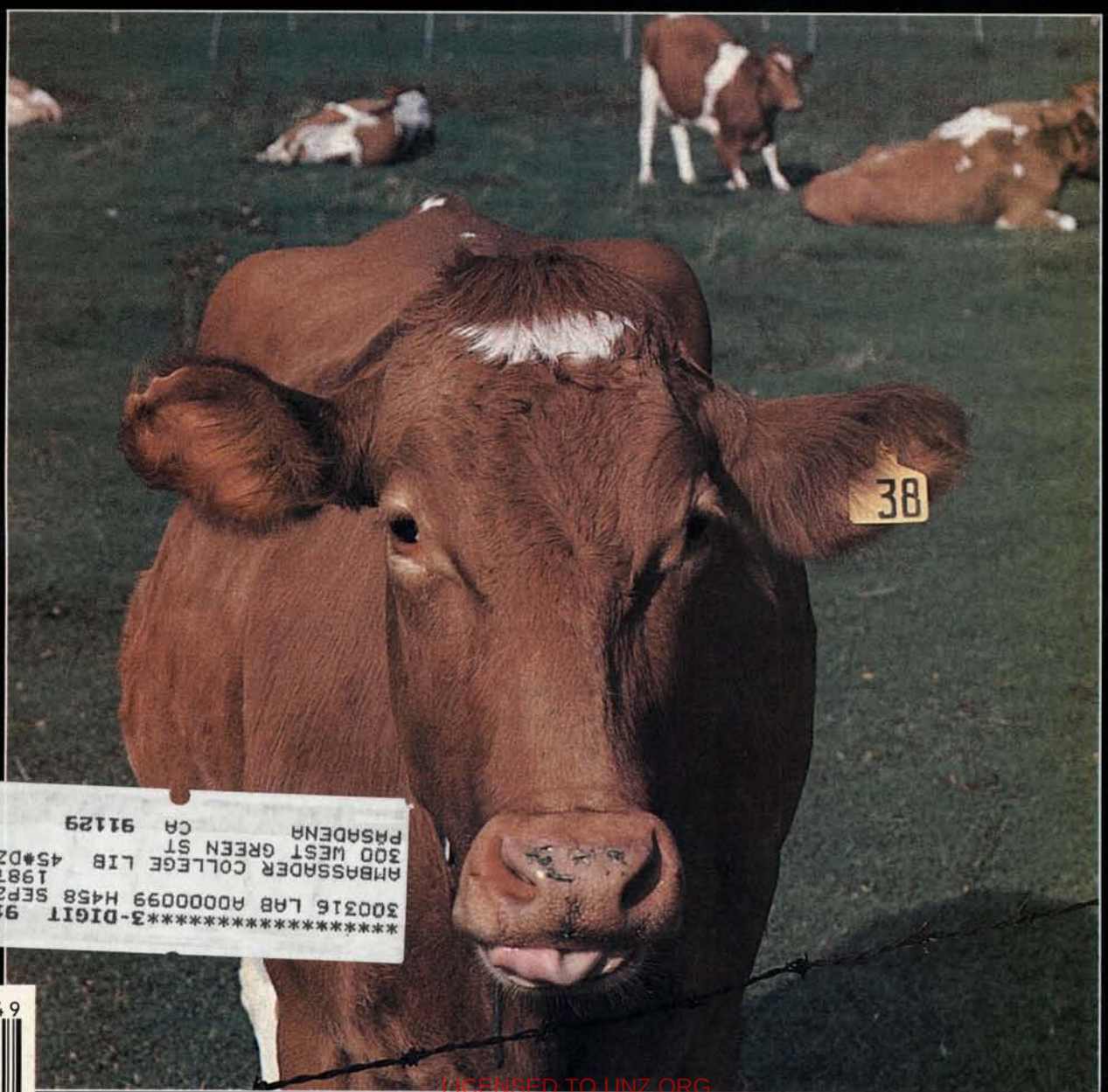
THE NEW REPUBLIC

THE IDIOCY OF RURAL LIFE



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FROM WASHINGTON

HOSTAGE TO HYPOCRISY

These are trying times for the loyal Reaganite. Not since that poignant moment in 1939 when American Communists learned about the Hitler-Stalin pact has a sudden policy reversal put devoted ideologues to such a severe test of their devotion. A party line of stark moral simplicity—no dealing with terrorist states—has suddenly gone all gooey and geopolitical. Reagan cultists had a couple of years to readjust their thinking about deficits. No such luxury this time.

As in 1939, many are falling off the train as it rounds this sharp bend. But a tenacious few hold on. Jeane Kirkpatrick, for example. Just last summer, she was writing with scorn about our craven allies who refuse to isolate terrorist nations. Now she writes with equal scorn of those who refuse to recognize "the hard realities with which governments must deal.... Governments, including those of our best friends, normally maintain open channels and working relationships with as many other governments as possible.... This is the way the world is." Dealing with terror even "may, occasionally, mean paying blackmail." Who'da thunk it?

And the gooeyist geopolitician of all is our president. Just last year Iran was part of "a new international version of Murder Incorporated." Now it "encompasses some of the most critical geography in the world ... a critical position ... oil flows ... an absence of dialogue...." Parts of Reagan's November 13 speech read like an application essay for the Trilateral Commission.

It's widely considered boring and juvenile to complain that an important national policy is hypocritical. Around my office, you get bopped on the head with quotations from Machiavelli if you try. The preferred complaints about Reagan's dealings with Iran analyze them in terms of ineptitude ("blunders"), decision-making disarray, or—ironically—geopolitical naïveté (we really should be tilting toward Iraq). Next in order of prestige come moral qualms about trading weapons for hostages. The simple objection that our president was saying one thing and doing another ranks very low.

Even when the focus is on the gap between Reagan's words and his deeds, the sophisticated term of abuse is "credibility," an interesting word. The implication is that the president doesn't actually have to be sincere, he just has to be believable.

It's true that in international diplomacy, as in personal relations, some hypocrisy is essential. But on the level of politics it is, or ought to be, less acceptable. Democracy can't function if leaders are allowed to say one thing and do another. The question of how to deal with terrorism has been one of the major foreign policy debates of the past few years. The perception that Reagan had very different ideas from President Carter about terrorism in general, and Iran in particular, was a key factor in his election. Imagine what would have happened in the last election if some Democratic candidate had tried to make a campaign issue out of the need to reach out and open a dialogue with Iran, because of its key strategic position and to free American hostages. Yet what is the point of elections if the winners can hide the fact that they aren't doing what they say?

Yes, diplomacy also requires secrecy. Reagan and his defenders have offered Henry Kissinger's secret pre-recognition dealings with China as a supposedly telling example. How much of that secrecy was diplomatic necessity and how much was Kissingerian melodramatics is a nice question. It's hard to believe the China thaw wasn't on the horizon with or without the theatrics. But, more important, relations with China were hardly a central political issue while Kissinger was engaged in his derring-do. President Nixon and other administration officials didn't spend the months of secret negotiations publicly bragging about our refusal to deal and scolding allies who refused to follow our high-minded example.

There are laws—derived from bitter experience—that are designed to assure democratic review of official actions. In order to justify operations like the secret Iran dealings, and funding of the Nicaraguan *contras*, and the Libyan disinformation campaign, Reagan administration lawyers have worked overtime to produce highly creative (though inadequate) explanations of how these laws don't apply on alternate Thursdays when the moon is full, and so on. Contrast this enthusiasm for legal sophistry with the administration's supposed devotion to "original intent" in the case of constitutional interpretation. It seems that reverence for the wishes of democratically elected representatives only applies if they've been dead for two centuries.

Reagan's new approach to Iran may even be the correct one. It's more geopolitically sophisticated and more compassionate toward the hostages than his previous tough-guy stance. (And there's been no little hypocrisy among Reagan's liberal critics who now criticize him for selling out.) But Reagan is the one who's made his reputation by seeming to reject both this sort of decadent geopolitical sophistication and this potentially paralyzing sentimentality.

Most agonizing foreign policy questions usually boil down to the trade-off between innocent lives and long-term national interests. War, for example. If Reagan's alleged "standing tall" means anything at all, it means that he is more prepared than others to sacrifice the few for the good of the many.

In fact, he has been spectacularly successful in having it both ways: taking "tough" actions that only cost the blood of foreigners—albeit including innocent foreigners—such as the *contra* war and the Libya bombing. (Oh, sure, there's Grenada, too: the toy war that was over before people knew it had happened.)

The reason Reagan gets away with this, of course, is that his hypocrisy mirrors the hypocrisy of the voters, who also want to be hard-nosed and sentimental at the same time. In that sense, unfortunately, the president's duplicity is a fulfillment of democracy more than its betrayal. We like being lied to.

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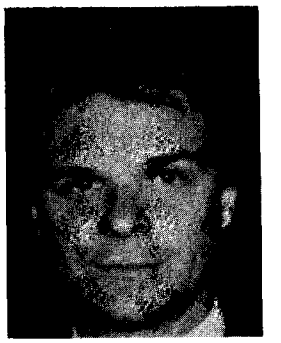

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CORRESPONDENCE

THE NOBLE NOBEL

To the editors:
What was the point of TNR's snide cover headline "How to Get a Nobel Prize" and the even more offensive title "Pop Goes Elie Wiesel" (November 10)? If the point of Jacob Weisberg's article was to disclose the grounds for his cynicism about the Nobel Prize (which Weisberg calls an "amorphous accolade") or the nomination process, we remain unenlightened. Cynicism is a facile response to the quest for peace in perhaps the most brutal century of human existence.

But why do Weisberg and TNR overlay this discussion of the prize and the process with titles and comments that unfairly disparage the Nobel Committee's most recent honoree? Who among us can honestly challenge Elie Wiesel's entitlement to the prize? He literally arose from the ashes of Auschwitz to become one of the leading poet/writer/philosophers of our day.

Holocaust survivor Sigmund Strochlitz should be commended and cheered for his efforts. We should all feel uplifted by the significance of this occasion. The award of the Nobel Peace Prize to Elie Wiesel will help the world to remember the horrors of the Holocaust and to keep alive the memory of its six million victims. Weisberg's mean-spirited article pointlessly seeks to diminish what will nevertheless remain a rare, inspiring, and noble moment in history.

EDWARD SANDERS
Member, The United States Holocaust Council
Los Angeles, California

To the editors:
"Pop Goes Elie Wiesel" reminded me that somehow I've never appreciated your punning titles, which snicker without being truly humorous or revealing. This one, with its innuendo that Elie Wiesel weaseled his way into the Nobel Peace Prize, seems particularly offensive and inappropriate.

Jacob Weisberg makes much of Wiesel's supporters, while mentioning Wiesel's achievements only in a negative light. Weisberg reports that Wiesel did not at all lobby for the prize. But then, unaccountably, he ends his article by saying, in effect, that Wiesel did do so: "Mother Theresa never did campaign for the Nobel Peace Prize. But she seems to be the exception, Elie Wiesel the rule."

Is this to be TNR's only notice of the award? It's a pretty cheap shot.

JOHN FELSTINER
Stanford, California

MOONIE BLUES

To the editors:
This letter in reply to Eric Alterman's piece on Rev. Moon, Inc. ("In Moon's Orbit," October 27) was composed in my mind during the World Media Conference when I noticed the mean-spirited intensity in the writer's every word and movement. (He was given free run of the conference.)

No guest speaker got more than two feet from the podium at the conclusion of their remarks before Mr. Alterman shoved his tape recorder in their faces and asked, "How do you feel about participating in a conference sponsored by Moon?" Not an unreasonable question, but since every participant knew in advance about the founder (an information sheet was mailed out with the conference invitations), their obvious answers were that it was not enough of a problem to keep them away.

The real disappointment was Alterman's foregone conclusion that the topics of the World Media Conference had no validity and that our stated reasons for the conference were masking a *real* motive.

The purpose of the World Media Conference lies in the belief that press freedom cannot be subject to even minor government regulation without seriously damaging or destroying it. Public perception of an arrogant, abusive media, however, is a very real threat to the free press. It never even occurred to Mr. Alterman that session topics such as "Media as Spectator and Participant," "The Media and Terrorism Symbiosis," and "Investigative Ethics: Privacy, Deception and National Security," and the resulting publication of the proceedings, are pretty serious and have implications for freedom of expression worldwide, regardless of who initiated the discussion.

LARRY R. MOFFITT
Executive Director, World Media Association
Washington, D.C.

SALVADORAN DEMOCRACY

To the editors:
Jefferson Morley's focus on "two representative Salvadorans"—Colonel Elmer González Araujo and Indian leader Adrián Esquino Lisco—is tendentious and denigrates the achievements of Salvadoran democrats ("The Terrorist and the Indian," October 27). Morley ignores the obvious: President Duarte, the freely elected leader of El Salvador, has a greater claim to being "representative" than either of the two men mentioned. Does Morley really believe El Salvador can be explained by the "representative" González? Does he really believe González is "representative" of the Salvadoran armed forces?

Equally silly is the assertion that "the State Department did a favor for the terrorist González" by using the word "apparently" in a human rights report dealing with the Las Hojas killings. The State Department does no favors for any terrorist, leftist or rightist, in El Salvador or anywhere else. Using "apparently" to characterize unproven—even if highly credible—allegations in a public document does not constitute a "favor."

Further, U.S. policy in El Salvador has not been dependent on "making the Salvadoran military confident of U.S. backing." Our policy has been to encourage the establishment of democracy, civilian authority, and the rule of law. Salvadoran democrats, from President Duarte on down, have fought hard to establish a democratic government while fighting a bitter guerrilla war and facing attacks from extremists of the left and right.

PATRICK E. FITZGERALD
Acting Director, Office of Central American and Panamanian Affairs
U.S. Department of State
Washington, D.C.

Jefferson Morley replies:
As Mr. FitzGerald acknowledges, "highly credible" evidence shows Colonel González ordered the killing of 74 innocent civilians in Las Hojas in February 1983. Credible evidence also shows that González has defrauded the Pentagon and caused the deaths of untold numbers of Salvadoran soldiers by supplying them with defective ammunition. González, far more than me, has made a mockery of "the achievements of Salvadoran democrats." Yet in the 45 months since the Las Hojas massacre, the State Department has never publicly commented on González's indiscretions. Denouncing my indiscretions, it seems, is more urgent.

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THE NEW REPUBLIC
DECEMBER 8, 1986

DEALING IN DECEPTION

Once again the Reagan administration finds itself trying to control the "spin" the press puts on its foreign policy misadventures. First there was the deal with the Soviets for the release of Nicholas Daniloff—a deal, the White House later assured us, that really wasn't a deal. Then came the White House campaign to spread phony stories about its plans in Libya—we were told it wasn't a disinformation campaign at all. Then the failed Reykjavik summit that wasn't really a summit, and wasn't a failure. And finally, there was the secret operation to get arms to the Nicaraguan *contras*—an operation that had White House fingerprints all over it, but that the White House has repeatedly denied having anything to do with. Each time the administration has strained harder to recast its activities in a favorable light.

And now comes the story of its secret dealings with Iran. The official version is that it was all part of a grand geopolitical gambit, an effort to reopen Iran, the keystone of Southwest Asia, to U.S. influence. "We did not trade weapons or anything else for hostages," the president declares. We shipped arms as a concrete indication of our good faith and our desire for a "relationship." Then we told our Iranian contacts that helping free the hostages in Lebanon would build our confidence in a similar way. Who could call that a deal of arms for hostages?

Reagan traded away much more than merely "a single cargo plane" of weapons. He gave up two established principles of American foreign policy. One was neutrality in the Gulf War. He claims he intended to help bring "an honorable end" to that conflict. How is this goal advanced by shipping arms to one of the belligerents, however "defensive" the arms and however small their quantity? In fact, it makes a fool of Secretary of State George Shultz, who just weeks ago told the Gulf Cooperation Council that the Soviets were not doing enough to prevent arms from getting to Iran. Why should *anyone* now respect an American call for an arms embargo? With the flow of weapons thus restored, Iran's prospects in this stalemated war improve dramatically. Reagan says we haven't "tilted" toward Iran, that shipping weapons to the mullahs helps us to serve as an honest broker. Has he tried explaining that to the Iraqis?

Even more important, the president squandered what looked like an emerging new consensus at home and among our allies in Europe in favor of a hard line against terrorism and the states that sponsor it. (Though many of those who now condemn the president's dealings have themselves advocated negotiations with hostile regimes in the Third World.) The Europeans in recent years have conciliated terrorists, sometimes by dealing through their sponsors in Syria and Iran. The Reagan administration has argued that such bargaining only encourages further acts of terror.

Following a wave of bombings this autumn in Paris, and a trend in the last few years toward more and more Middle East-related terrorism in Europe, the allies had begun to see the American logic. Britain severed diplomatic ties with Syria, the most egregious Middle Eastern retailer of terror, in response to evidence that the Assad regime had plotted to bomb an Israeli airliner in London. The European Economic Community followed that by adopting an arms embargo and diplomatic sanctions against Syria. Even the French, Europe's most cynical advocates of appeasement toward hijackers and hostage-takers, grudgingly went along with the resolution.

Now this hard-won victory for U.S. diplomacy is gone. The French can barely contain their delight at the news that America had been behaving just as cynically as they had. Prime Minister Jacques Chirac, welcoming home two French hostages after dickering with Syria for their release, publicly thanked Assad for his help in getting them out. Chirac's foreign minister sniffed that *France* would never stoop to swapping arms for hostages. Meanwhile, the British seem foolish for standing up for what they thought was our tough policy.

Of course, Israel too has always preached a hard line on terrorism. Yet it quite willingly served as go-between in the arms-for-hostages swap. This was consistent with past Israeli arms shipments to Tehran, which the United States had put a stop to back in 1983. Israel calculates that the Persian nation, distant from Israel yet hostile to the Arabs, is not a threat to its security—no matter how much rhetoric the mullahs may expend on ritual calls for a march to Jerusalem. Israel believes that its security is served by an Iran just strong enough to keep the Iraqis tied down in a

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bloody war. The Israelis apparently valued this assessment of their national interest so highly that they were willing to damage the moral authority of their stance against state-sponsored terrorism in order to advance it.

THE HARD-LINE position has been vindicated by the results of the Reagan swap. The administration's concessions to the Iranians only purchased more terror. Reagan asserts that since he started dealing with Iran "there has been no evidence of Iranian government complicity in acts of terrorism against the United States. Hostages have come home—and we welcome the efforts that the government of Iran has taken in the past and is currently undertaking." In fact, the White House was repeatedly hoodwinked by the Iranians. Each installment of arms to Tehran bought disappointment, as fewer hostages than expected were released; by the time the game finally ended, three new hostages had been taken to replace those who had been released. There were five American hostages in Lebanon when the president first ventured into the Persian bazaar. There are still five American hostages in Lebanon. As for "efforts" Iran is "currently undertaking," the latest was a demand by the Iran's U.N. ambassador that the United States ship more arms and money in exchange for intercession on behalf of the hostages.

The president let his sentimental desire to see the hostages freed override his instinct for sticking to clear and consistent principles in foreign affairs. To help him and his successors resist such temptations in the future, this country should announce a clear policy: American citizens who visit places like Beirut do so at their own risk. If they are taken hostage by terrorists, they cannot expect their government to rescue them. The one exception should be for military, intelligence, or diplomatic personnel, who are acting in service to country, and whose capture could lead to the loss of vital national security information. Any other stance, appealing though it may be on humanitarian grounds, only encourages further hostage-takings.

The administration's botched Iran project is all the more lamentable because this country does in fact have a strategic interest in Iran. That country straddles the oil shipping lanes of the Persian Gulf, and lies between the southern border of the Soviet Union and warm-water ports in the Gulf and on the Arabian Sea. Political transition and even political upheaval within Iran are likely to follow the Gulf War's conclusion and the Ayatollah Khomeini's death. It is in the United States' interest to make sure that the changes don't result in greater Soviet influence.

The Iranian mullahs themselves, for reasons of religious ideology, Persian nationalism, and geopolitical calculation, aren't eager to see Soviet influence strengthened in Iran. The Islamic Republic has kept up a steady drumbeat against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and has even supplied aid to the Afghan rebels. The revolutionary theocrats have done their best to stamp out the Communist Tudeh party within Iran. Still, the Soviets have continued trade and diplomatic relations with the Islamic Republic. A Soviet first deputy foreign minister went to Tehran last February, the highest ranking Soviet official ever to visit revolutionary Iran. The Soviet Union has a hand in Iran, just in case. And it is right there, on the border.

Against this, the United States has going for it a kind of natural convergence of geopolitical interests with Iran. Our interest is in keeping a large and strategically located nation out of the Soviet sphere. From the Iranian point of view, we are powerful and far away. Unlike the Soviets, we can give the Iranians things they value—Western technology and access to the Western financial system, to name two—without infringing unduly on their national interests and ambitions. This convergence was the basis of America's relationship with the Shah of Iran. It could conceivably form the basis of a relationship with a post-Khomeini regime as well. That is the case for continuing the search for Iranians in the government who, whatever their ideology, at least harbor an opportunistic interest in dealing with the outside world.

For now, though, the question remains: Who is left to deal with? In the whirl of Iranian politics, with its factional backbiting, military mobilization, and religious zealotry, it's impossible to discern a clear answer. Were the Reagan administration's contacts in Iran really "moderates" who both stood to gain power in post-Khomeini Iran and wanted to use that power to open Iran to the United States? Or were they simply more-cynical-than-usual Islamic revolutionaries manipulating our hostage angst to further their own purposes against Iraq? It's unlikely that Robert McFarlane, John Poindexter, and Donald Regan knew any better than the State Department specialists they declined to consult. In either case, naming certain individuals or factions in Tehran as confidants of the Great Satan hardly helps their political prospects. It may put them in danger of execution. The speaker of the Iranian Parliament, Hojatolislam Hashemi Rafsanjani, who revealed the visit of Robert McFarlane to Tehran, did so—in tones of contempt—to head off a charge from radicals that he was truckling to the United States. Prime Minister Mir Hossein Musavi has returned to the usual labeling of the United States as "criminal." Any bridges we may have built to such people lie in ruins. It will be a long time before we can repair them.

NOTEBOOK

□ TIIIM-BERRR!: Capitulating to the lumber lobby's questionable claim that Canada subsidizes lumber exports, the Reagan administration recently slapped a 15 percent tariff on Canadian wood. The United States is the last country that should be engaging in the "countervailing duties" game. We spend billions to "promote" exports of our agricultural products. These subsidies steal markets from farmers and peasants the world over. Our own U.S. Forest Service also provides millions in subsidies for domestic lumber production in the National Forests. (See "Chop Chop" by Bennett H. Beach, TNR, May 26.) The lumber tariff already has produced the two inevitable results of protectionism. One is to raise prices—new homes will cost

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an average of $300 more. The price of old homes will follow suit, and jobs will be lost throughout the economy as home buyers have $300 less to spend on other goods and services. Second, the other side has struck back with protectionism of its own. In this case, Canada has imposed a dollar-a-bushel tariff on imports of U.S. corn, which they dryly, and correctly, argue is subsidized far more heavily than their lumber. What's our next move?

□ IRONY IS DEAD: A recent TNR article ("On the Hill: Heroes and Zeroes" by Thomas O. Melia and Sueanne Pfifferling, October 27) discussed the congressional ratings put out by various political interest groups. The authors mentioned Representative Glenn Anderson of California as an example of a politician who, through an especially craven posture, manages to get high ratings from groups across the political spectrum. Result? "Glenn Anderson No. 1 crowd pleaser," headlined the *Long Beach Press Telegram* over a story reporting that Anderson "ranks first in the nation as a crowd pleaser among the 535 members of the U.S. Congress." Anderson is quoted as saying modestly, "I would have been happy to be in the top 20."

□ HOW ABOUT AN IMPACT STATEMENT IMPACT STATEMENT? The Justice Department, in a 90-page study of federalism issued last month, has urged that Congress be required to produce a written "federalism impact statement" for each bill it passes. Within days, the Education Department issued a 64-page report on the family, urging that all new laws and regulations be accompanied by a written "family

THE ZEITGEIST CHECKLIST

BY CHARLES PAUL FREUND

This Week		Last Week	Weeks on Chart
1.	UP IN ARMS	1	4
2.	SWIFT AND SURE RESPONSE	3	2
3.	BETTER FEARED THAN LOVED	*	3
4.	STREET CRIME	—	1
5.	A NEW LEAF	*	2
6.	BISHOPS' GAMBIT	4	4
7.	CONTRADISTINCTIONS	*	4
8.	WATCH ON THE SLIME	—	1
9.	REELING IN THE YEARS	—	1
10.	IN OTHER WORDS	—	1

1. UP IN ARMS

Hostages. With the Iran deal, indignant pack journalism has returned to White House coverage. Damage control efforts have borne little fruit; intra-Cabinet conflict has diverted attention, and even released hostages publicly reject an arms-for-us exchange. Charges of incompetence have reached hyperbolic levels (worst such screwup "in history"), and embrace the anti-Libya disinformation business, the Daniloff trade, arms talks, etc. Hostage family reaction, usually a major focus, has disappeared from the stage.

2. SWIFT AND SURE RESPONSE

Reagan. The lame-duck syndrome has arrived at last. According to polls, the American public has overwhelmingly shrugged at the Iran TV chat. Reagan is increasingly portrayed as a president whose luck has run out. One victim is Bush. His political prospects are inextricably tied to Reagan.

3. BETTER FEARED THAN LOVED

AIDS. The party's over. From *Newsweek* to Jules Feiffer to fuchsia-colored condoms advertised in women's magazines, the fear of sex is being reported and thereby promoted. Precoital discussion of sexual histories by (sober) near-strangers is reportedly common, and the spread of monogamy observed in the gay community last year has hit the increasingly concerned straight community, too.

4. STREET CRIME

Insider trading. The $100 million fine assessed against big-time Wall Street insider Ivan Boesky joins earlier insider scandals and concerns that Wall Street has been over-wired by computerization. Boesky's problems quickly grew into a debate over takeover mania. Wall Street's activities may not be well-understood, but greed is, and news that other traders are scrambling for attorneys is playing to an ill-concealed undercurrent of satisfaction.

5. A NEW LEAF

Smoking. New findings on ambient smoke and children underscore the recent view of smoking as an assault on others. Meanwhile, the political muscle of tobacco companies is reportedly in rapid decline, and even the sponsorship of sporting events by cigarette brands is under question.

*Item resurfaces in the Zeitgeist after at least one week's absence.

6. BISHOPS' GAMBIT

Vatican. The first news angle at the bishops' Washington conclave was alienation of the Americans from the Vatican—conflict being sure news footing. But by the conclave's end, attention had shifted to the bishops' slam at U.S. economic injustices, which some have taken seriously, and which others think will be another impassioned door stop.

7. CONTRADISTINCTIONS

Hasenfus. As the Hasenfus trial concluded, articles popped up in several periodicals (including this one) exploring the structure and personnel of anti-Sandinista activities. The Hasenfus affair is only beginning to join the litany of purported Reaganite adventurism, but meanwhile even pro-interventionists are now citing the case (and its incriminating documents) as examples of amateurism.

8. WATCH ON THE SLIME

The Rhine spill. There's a new fouled-nest story weekly; few stick. The spill of toxics into the Rhine is just one of Europe's severe environmental problems; the decline of forests due to auto exhausts is even reported on European shortwave services. But coverage shows no signs of extending to other environmental concerns. Nor, apart from the Greens, does the issue develop politically. Few want to rock the economic boat.

9. REELING IN THE YEARS

Movies. Variety's numerical look at movie ratings since their 1968 inception reveals not only the total disappearance of the X rating, avoided since the movie audience became predominantly teenaged, but also the disappearance of G-rated films. In '68, one-third of U.S. releases were judged family fare; in the '80s, it's accounted for three percent. The preferred film mode is the brutal and/or titillating R-rated film, accounting for roughly half of U.S. films yearly.

10. IN OTHER WORDS

Language. Given how long non-married couples have been common, the absence of a useful descriptive term for the individuals involved is surprising. "Significant Other," the most recent effort in a rather long line of phrases, is suddenly ubiquitous, but already has drawn objection, apparently because it is covering *too much* ground. Where are Ogden Nash and the American neologists when they're needed?

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impact statement." Onward and upward in the Reaganite battle against government bureaucracy and red tape.

□ OH, THAT'S WHAT SHE MEANT:

CORRECTIONS

A book review on Nov. 6 of Renata Adler's "Reckless Disregard" misattributed garbling in a sentence from page 208. The book's publisher, Alfred A. Knopf Inc., reports that the *density of the passage resulted from* two typographical errors in the published version. The sentence should have read: "With this answer, if Halevy's presence (and his apparent readiness to say anything at all, as if factual matters were a thing of barter, or of haggling in a souk) were not already so disorienting, Time's whole position fell, perhaps not for the first time, to smithereens."

—*New York Times*

□ FIRST WORD . . . TWO SYLLABLES . . . SOUNDS LIKE 'HANGER':

For the Record

Because of an editing error, an article in The Times on Friday reported that Sen. Robert C. Byrd (D-W.Va.) declared that he was angry and shocked by reports that the United States had sent arms to Iran in exchange for aid in freeing American hostages. Actually, Byrd said he was shocked, but did not say he was angry. He expressed anger by slamming his fist on the table as he spoke.

—*Los Angeles Times*

POSTCARD BELIZE

KING CUBS

ALTHOUGH IT IS usually the happiest of places, these days there is no joy in Belize. "Last year things were different," a shopkeeper in Belize City told me in September. "We had such a sense of optimism. This year there's no hope." He was right. At the end of the season, the Chicago Cubs had proved last year's pennant was a fluke and were back in fifth place in the National League East. For the citizens of Belize, the most loyal Cubs fans south of the Loop, these are dark days.

Belize, a country of 150,000 people tucked under Mexico's Yucatán peninsula, is not a typical Central American nation. Few other residents of this region have the luxury of worrying about relief pitcher Scott Sanderson's arm. Belize is peaceful, democratic, comfortably bilingual and multiracial. In atmosphere if not fact, it is a Caribbean nation: Rastamen hustle in the streets, the people speak in a Creole patois, and its leading export—bringing in the equivalent of 75 percent of the country's GNP—is marijuana. Although Belize gained its independence from Britain in 1981, it still suffers from colonial hangover. Its streets, with names such as Victoria, Regent, and King, are filled with potholes and dust and lined with dilapidated houses. But now Belize is lurching into the 20th century. What is pulling it there, in large part, is television.

Six years ago, Belize's romance with the Cubs could not have existed, for there was no television here. The romance began in December 1980, when U.S.-born entrepreneur Emory King bought a satellite dish and began taping programs. (King wound up in Belize in 1953 when his round-the-world cruise ran aground on a barrier reef.) King made about $5,000 a month renting tapes of sports, movies, and soap operas at $2.50 a day to people with VCRs. Soon an accountant named Nestor Vasquez started renting tapes too.

In August 1981 Arthur Hoare, a Belize City shipbuilder, bought a satellite dish and soon began to broadcast. Vasquez followed in February 1983. "I wrote to the satellite services like Home Box Office asking them if I should pay them anything," Vasquez says. "They wrote back that they are prohibited from doing any business abroad, so I guess it was no."

Today Hoare and Vasquez are the William Paley and Roone Arledge of Belize. Of the two, Vasquez has the greater commitment to quality television. He takes the trouble of pulling down shows from many different stations on the satellite and constructing a day's programming, complete with commercials.

Vasquez at first broadcast mostly movies and situation comedies. But he struck oil when he tried soap operas. He now runs three daytime soaps a day, plus "Dynasty" and "Dallas" at night, and counts the soap "Santa Barbara" as his most popular program. "When I took 'Days of Our Lives' off the air last year," he says, "the phone wouldn't stop ringing. I took it off the hook, but then women started coming into my office to complain." The program quickly reappeared.

Hoare takes a more relaxed approach. He aims his dish at WGN, Chicago's Channel 9—"It was easy to get," he says—and leaves it there. All day. Belize City residents watch Bozo the Clown, Chicagoland Church, every Cubs game, even "The Nine O'Clock News," which comes on during the summer at 8 o'clock. They know a great deal more about Cook County election commissioners than they do about, say, Belize.

The stations in the capital, Belize City, look like PBS compared to the stations in Belize's outlying districts, some of which were showing X-rated movies in the afternoons and early evenings. "The priests raised hell," says Emory King. "Then the government said you could only run them midnight to five in the morning. Production fell, kids were going to school without breakfast. It was terrible."

I LOOKED FOR households in Belize without television; I couldn't find more than a few. Teachers say that

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students don't do their homework. Clothing store owners report that demand for Hawaiian shirts and cowboy boots is up—"Magnum, P.I." and "Dallas" are popular shows. "TV has killed us," says Thomas Donovan, owner of The Book Center, what used to be one of four bookstores in Belize City but is now one of two.

And there's the Cubs. Belizeans are not baseball fans so much as Cubs fans; no one's heard of the American League, but they do love the Cubs' irrepressible announcer Harry Caray. Gary Matthews, left fielder for the Cubs, visited Belize in March 1985, perhaps in response to what must have seemed like a baffling quantity of fan mail from a place he'd never heard of. Matthews's arrival had the trappings of a state visit. He was received by several Cabinet ministers and the first lady. According to one Belizean from the town of San Pedro, Matthews got a bigger reception than Queen Elizabeth did on her visit seven months later.

BUT MANY PEOPLE in Belize are concerned about TV's effects. "Imagine a family of four living in a two-bedroom house with no indoor plumbing," says Ernesto Vazquez, manager of an office supply store in Belize City. "They don't own a car and never will. Their lights are plain light bulbs. They have a small radio. They've never been further than the Mexican border. They have a small black-and-white TV. Imagine them looking at gorgeous men and women in beautiful homes with two cars. It's not tangible, it's just on the screen, but now they know people live like this. . . . The way we're going, our kids won't be caught dead wearing Belizean sandals. We're having a rock contest in the Civic Center tonight, for the first time in Belize. You'd never see a Bruk Down [Belize's traditional music] contest. Crime has increased. Illegitimate births have increased." Vazquez has five televisions in his home.

Belize's TV moguls defend their product. "It's a good way of fighting communism," says Nestor Vasquez. Hoare is, typically, more modest: "It keeps husbands at home instead of going to the club, getting drunk, and coming home and causing a fuss."

In an effort to bring order to the airwaves, on September 1 the Belize government began requiring station owners to follow some rules. From now on they must pay for a license. They must run local-origin and educational programs, fewer foreign commercials, no X-rated movies—and no more Chicago local news. Changes are unlikely; no operator has the facilities or money, never mind the desire, to produce local programs. "I told the broadcasting people I'm not interested in anything local, I'll do everything foreign," Hoare told me. He told the Broadcasting Authority he'd comply with the rules, but at 8 p.m. on September 1, there it was again, "The Nine O'Clock News," with the usual footage of the Cook County board of election commissioners. Stay tuned.

TINA ROSENBERG

Tina Rosenberg, who lives in Latin America, wrote about Mexico's earthquake in the June 2 issue.

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

MEGA-SPIN DON

DONALD T. REGAN, the White House chief of staff, blinked first. Three days after the story broke about U.S. weapons shipments to Iran, he was ready to jettison the White House strategy of saying practically nothing about the affair and warning that the lives of American hostages in Lebanon might be jeopardized if it did. "We're bleeding here," Regan told President Reagan on November 6. The very presidency is on the line. Do you want the clumsy overtures to Iran to be your legacy after six years of accomplishments?

The president was unpersuaded, and probably a bit surprised. Since Regan swapped jobs in February 1985 with James A. Baker, he had devoted himself to catering to Reagan's political and policy instincts. When the president agreed to visit Bitburg in the spring of 1985, Regan raised a mild objection. Can't you wriggle out of going there? he asked. "I'm going," Reagan snapped, and Regan piped down. Despite qualms, he went along last January with the decision to dispatch arms to Iran, an action at least partially aimed at freeing the hostages. His approval was pivotal. John Poindexter, the national security adviser, and CIA director William Casey were in favor, Secretary of State George Shultz and Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger were opposed. Had Regan joined Shultz and Weinberger, Reagan would surely have balked. But Regan knew the president was desperate to get the hostages out, and so he acceded to the plan.

At the November 6 meeting, Reagan sided with Poindexter, who claimed the Iran scheme could still work, if only the administration would continue to stonewall. The hostages might yet be released and a new relationship with Iran established. Regan was inclined to say: Forget the hostages. This has gone too far. But knowing Reagan's emotional commitment to getting the hostages out, he didn't want to appear callous. He kept silent.

Poindexter prevailed, but Regan was back again on November 10, with a new plea for the White House to go public. This time, he had a supporter, Casey, who brought with him a proposed statement, brimming with details. But after Poindexter and his minions vetted the statement, the details were gone. Instead, the White House reiterated that secrecy should prevail. "Stressing the fact that the hostages' lives are at stake, the president asked his advisers to insure that their departments refrain from making comments or speculating on these matters," it said.

The best Regan could cajole out of the president that day was an agreement to confer with congressional leaders on Wednesday, November 12. But the chief of staff also had a secret ally. When the president is embroiled in a controversy, it upsets first lady Nancy Reagan. She contacted Regan

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and asked plaintively if something could be done about the Iran flap. "Tell your husband to listen to his chief of staff," Regan told her. By Wednesday the president was more amenable. "This thing isn't dying," Regan told him. Though Poindexter still balked, the president ordered up a statement that he would deliver the next day, November 13. Poindexter's staff did the first draft. Reagan disliked it, and his speechwriters rewrote it. The initial plan was for the president to deliver the statement in the White House pressroom. Reagan decided otherwise. "I want to do this on [prime time] TV," he declared to aides. "That's the only way."

It took a week, but Regan won the fight inside the White House. Besides Reagan's nationally televised speech, he summoned a full White House effort to "turn" national opinion in favor of the president. One official called it "mega" spin control, a greater effort than even the "super" spin control that the White House tried to exert on coverage of the Iceland summit in October. Regan himself led the way. The day after the president's speech, Regan appeared on "Good Morning America" at 7 a.m., met with three dozen reporters over breakfast at 7:30 a.m., briefed a group of columnists and TV commentators at 10 a.m., talked to network reporters at 1 p.m., took questions from radio reporters at 4:30, and was interviewed by NBC's Tom Brokaw at 5:30. He closed the day with an interview with the *New York Times* in which he boasted that the White House had managed to change the public perception of the Iceland summit, "the disinformation thing," and the loss of the Senate in the November 4 elections. "I don't say we'll be able to do it four times in a row," Regan said. "But here we go again, and we're trying."

LOTS OF LUCK. Regan's faith in the White House's ability to sell its line was misplaced. The public, skeptical about the president's claim that there was no arms-for-hostages swap, didn't budge. Regan argued the case strenuously, but he slipped up by citing the Nicholas Daniloff affair. "Did we make a swap for Daniloff?" he asked the reporters at breakfast. This was supposed to be a rhetorical question. But the reporters bellowed in unison, "Yes." Regan looked slightly unnerved. Still, so boundless is his faith in spin control that he dispatched Shultz, who had disagreed with the overtures to Iran, to appear on "Face the Nation." Shultz had given Regan no assurance that he would support the White House line. And he didn't.

The Regan-Shultz relationship will never be the same, which will make matters tough for Shultz at the White House. Shultz violated two of Regan's rules. One is that you don't speak out publicly unless you're going to back the president. The other is that, if you were a participant in the decision, you are obligated to support the policy. Regan was angered when Shultz declined to take responsibility for comments to the press by unnamed State Department officials that were critical of the Iran policy. Then he was miffed when Shultz didn't back the policy in the private meeting with congressional leaders two days later. Regan complained that some in the administration were "CYAing"—covering their asses. He had Shultz (who lived in Regan's house near Mount Vernon for weeks when he became secretary of state in 1982) in mind.

Regan's relationship with Poindexter is also altered. Not only did Poindexter contradict Regan's advice, but he was sparing in the information he revealed to Regan about the Iran mission. At one White House damage control meeting, Regan asked exactly how big the shipment of arms was. Bigger than a bread box? Only then did he learn that there was enough to fill a large cargo plane. At another session, he got Poindexter to say that no more arms would be sent to Iran and thus that the release of more hostages was not imminent. And there are other signs of distancing. Since the day Poindexter became national security adviser, it was assumed in Washington that he was Regan's handpicked choice. Not so, according to those close to Regan. It was Shultz and Robert McFarlane, Poindexter's predecessor, who touted him for the job. Casey and Weinberger expressed doubts about Poindexter's political and public relations skills. In the end, Regan endorsed Poindexter because Reagan liked him. That was enough for Regan.

The long knives in Washington, even those inside the administration, are out for Regan. His style appeals to Reagan. (Regan has an aide, Thomas Dawson, assigned to come up with a joke for him to tell the president each morning.) But others find him too aggrandizing and too fond of the trappings of power. Around the White House, he is called "The Chief." On formal occasions, he is now introduced over the loudspeaker before the president: "Ladies and gentlemen, the chief of staff of the President of the United States." He is often seated on the stage beside the president, the only aide there. He prefers to keep his own counsel and says he doesn't need a brainy ideas-man like Richard Darman, who served under Baker at the White House and now is deputy treasury secretary: "I'm my own Darman."

NOT SURPRISINGLY, the Iran affair brought on comparisons between Regan and Baker. In the Iran case, Regan loses. His own underlings concede that Baker would probably have tried to stop Reagan from shipping the arms. "I can imagine Baker siding with Shultz on this business," says one aide. "Regan is more of a gambler. Reagan is a gambler. They have that in common." Sometimes gambles pay off. Regan relentlessly pursued the president's wish to provide aid to the *contras* in spite of repeated rebuffs in Congress. He was vindicated last June when Congress approved aid. He refused to give up on the nomination of Daniel Manion for the U.S. Court of Appeals, and Manion was narrowly confirmed. Regan, who craves credit for such successes, has one clear measure that favors him over Baker. That is Reagan's popularity. In Baker's time, public support for Reagan's presidential performance dipped below 50 percent. Under Regan, it has stayed mostly above 60 percent.

Regan's strength is also his vulnerability. If the Iran flap persists and the president's popularity is severely

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dented, Regan will get a chunk of the blame. When he took the job as chief of staff, he signaled that he could walk away from it anytime. Just before the announcement that he and Baker were changing jobs, Regan huddled in the Oval Office with the president and three others. "I've got something that none of these other guys have," Regan told the president. He was referring to Baker, Edwin Meese, and Michael Deaver, then the top three aides at the White House. "Baker has some of it, but not enough," said Regan. "Meese doesn't have any of it, and he never will. Deaver doesn't have any either, but he's going to get some." The president took the bait. "OK, I'll ask," he said. "What is it?" To which Regan, wealthy from his days as boss of Merrill Lynch, replied, "Fuck you money." If the political crisis over arms and Iran gets any worse, Regan may need it.

FRED BARNES

Left-wing venture philanthropists.

GILT GUILT

WHEN ANNIE HOFFMAN was 21, she received a large inheritance from her grandfather, a millionaire vice president of Kodak, friend of George Eastman, and early investor in Xerox. This caused her considerable anxiety. As she puts it, "I come from a family where there is so much money that money is never discussed. I felt like I had no vocabulary to talk about it." Today Hoffman is 31 and she can't stop talking about her money. What happened?

Eight years ago, she went to a seminar for young heirs and heiresses sponsored by the Haymarket People's Fund, a Boston-based foundation that supports the progressive causes that more traditional philanthropies won't touch. There Hoffman found an empathetic group of peers and the cause she was looking for: bankrolling "social change." In 1985 Hoffman gave $10,000 to "groups doing anti-racist, anti-military/nuclear, community, feminist, gay/lesbian, environment, disabled and older people's rights, and workplace organizing." Now she helps organize Inherited Wealth Conferences to draw in other rich, mostly young people with an interest in supporting such groups.

Haymarket was started in 1974 by George Pillsbury, an heir to the baking fortune. That year it gave $40,000 to 20 causes based in New England, among them Boston's Ad Hoc South End Committee. In 1985 it distributed almost $400,000 to groups such as the Rhode Island Feminist Chorus and Vermont's Peace Education Action Center. All told, there are over 30 self-styled "alternative" or "progressive" foundations like Haymarket that are attempting to keep alive the spirit of '60s activism the same way their parents might once have sustained the local children's hospital. These foundations now operate in 20 states and donate $8 million to $10 million annually. Since 1979, 14 of the largest of them—including Haymarket and San Francisco's Vanguard Foundation, which gave away $600,000 last year—have been linked by a national umbrella group, the Funding Exchange. The Exchange's mission, according to its five-year report, is to coordinate "work towards a more equitable distribution of wealth and power."

The wealthy scions of alternative philanthropy tend to employ Marxist jargon when discussing the distribution of wealth, but they describe the origins of alternative philanthropy in the emotional terms of rich kids struggling with the guilt of having inheritances. *Robin Hood Was Right*, the bible of the movement (co-authored by Obie Benz, an heir to the Sunbeam bread fortune and a founder of Vanguard), is peppered with anonymous testimonials from those who found relief in alternative philanthropy: "I'll never forget what a thrill it was for me the first time I was in a group talking about inherited wealth. . . . Being able to talk about it all with others gave me an incredible charge . . . the weekend meeting finished up with a big party, and I danced like crazy even though I usually don't dance at all."

Charles Shanock, one of the few board members of San Francisco's Threshold Foundation who didn't grow up rich, describes a "rap session on money" during which one young inheritor stood up crying and said he felt as if he had "survivor's guilt." David Pillsbury Becker, a first cousin of George Pillsbury, gives about $30,000 annually to Haymarket, and credits the foundation with having helped him establish a personal identity. "It was important to me on a strict coming-out level," says Becker. "I was gay and I was guilty of having money. I came out with my money at the same time I came out sexually. Haymarket helped me get my life on track."

As Benz explains, he sympathized with the political and social movements of the '60s but had trouble fitting in because he was self-conscious about having money. Traditional philanthropy was no way out either. Benz saw it as "programs alleviating the surface manifestations of problems whose real causes are much deeper." So in 1971 he created alternative philanthropy—in the form of a donor network that the founders originally dubbed "BARF," for "Bay Area Rich Folks." Eventually BARF became the Vanguard Foundation.

The alternatives' professed goal is a coalition of groups working for social change, but this isn't easy to achieve. As Pillsbury says, "We can only fund groups that exist and have popular support." Yet social change groups are notorious for going out of business after a short time. When asked about the individual "success rates" of the groups they fund, the alternatives are hard-pressed to answer. Success, they explain, is difficult to assess at the grassroots level—and the foundations do almost no follow-up on how grantees spend their money.

THE FOUNDATIONS themselves are subject to the prevailing winds of social change politics. In the post-Attica years of the early '70s, prison reform was the hot

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issue. Four of Vanguard's 13 grants in 1972 went to prisoners' rights groups. But as the public's interest in prison reform waned, so did Vanguard's. It funded three prisoner-related groups in 1973, two in 1974, and one in 1975. That one lingered until 1984, when the foundation finally gave up on the cause altogether. Haymarket had no interest in Central America until 1982, and none in South Africa (with the exception of one group, the East Coast South Africa Catalyst Project, in 1979) until 1981. Recent causes of choice include Asian Lesbians of the East Coast ($1,000 from North Star for "outreach and educational activities"), Children of the Green Earth ($25,000 from Threshold for "planning, caring for and celebrating trees together"), and the Greater Hartford Coors Boycott Campaign ($1,000 from Haymarket for putting "economic pressure on Coors to change its policies"). Pillsbury, now a fund-raiser for a group called Jobs with Peace, concedes: "We fall into the trap of wanting to move on to the latest issue. We're the venture capitalists of philanthropy." Similarly, the alternatives are often most attractive to people who simply can't decide which cause to back. Says Hillary Smith, the executive director of Haymarket: "People are tired of deciding between whales and South Africa. They like us because we fund a broad base of organizations."

But these opponents of capitalism know the importance of the bottom line. Once a foundation joins the powerful Funding Exchange, it must make a concerted effort to keep solvent by finding rich donors in its region. Otherwise, it may risk being expelled from the Exchange—as Washington, D.C.'s Common Capital Support Fund (CCSF) discovered earlier this year. CCSF seemed to be the very model of a social change foundation. Between 1981 and 1986, it gave away $210,000 to organizations such as the Washington Free Clinic and D.C. Services for Independent Living. Unfortunately, CCSF spent only a fraction of its time recruiting donors with family money, and raised half of its revenue from people who made average contributions of $25. (Haymarket, by contrast, gets 90 percent of its money from heirs and heiresses, and the average donation is $700.) The Funding Exchange had little patience with this barely solvent philanthropy. It expelled CCSF from its ranks on the ground that it was financially shaky.

THE LARGER alternatives are secure for the time being, but they worry about how they will "expand their donor base" to stay active in the future. Several, including Haymarket and Liberty Hill in Austin, Texas, have tried reaching out to "ordinary citizens" by direct mail, but the return has not been high. At Haymarket, Smith thinks the future of alternative philanthropy lies not in taking the foundations "public," but in identifying a new generation of young people with inherited wealth by sponsoring "socially responsible investment seminars" on college campuses. So far, Haymarket has visited Wesleyan, Harvard, and U-Mass Boston.

But in the final analysis, raising and distributing money is only part of alternative philanthropy's raison d'être. Helping the guilty rich feel better about themselves is equally important. As the movement's original manifesto, *Robin Hood Was Right*, reveals, simply being with others trying to cope with the same struggle is therapeutic: "We also discovered people with whom we could talk about [our] problems. . . . And we found that our dilemmas were not so difficult after all. There are, after all, worse problems than growing up rich."

ADAM PAUL WEISMAN

Daniloff meets Mickey Mouse.

THE FAME GAME

NICHOLAS DANILOFF is the latest in a line of "modern heroes." A media maker turned media celebrity, he is the most recent embodiment of the usual American confusion of heroes and famous people. His story confirms the basic American assumption that visibility and publicity are the way to freedom, while anonymity is another form of enslavement.

There are essentially two reasons why Daniloff's seizure by the KGB became a far more significant issue than, say, that of Francis J. Crawford, the International Harvester representative arrested in the Soviet Union a few years ago for currency fraud, or Frederick Barghoorn, the Yale political scientist imprisoned for a time in 1963. First, Daniloff's arrest appeared to be accidental: the KGB needed to abduct someone in retaliation for the seizure of Gennady Zakharov in New York, and Daniloff was a convenient target. And second, Daniloff is a journalist, and the world press is a better support group when you're in trouble in Russia than is either an American company or a university.

American journalism has a liking for the accidentally famous—whether the accident is good luck (winning a lottery) or bad (being hit by a meteorite in your bedroom). Occasionally, the accidentally famous person has actually done something praiseworthy, like Lenny Skutnik, who in January 1981 dove into the icy Potomac to help rescue passengers after the crash of an Air Florida plane. The crucial element in the story is the accident. There has to be no hype, no media prep, no premeditation. It just happened. Reporters, otherwise stale with cynicism about the business of making and reporting news, then seize on the "hero," one unspoiled flower in the trash heap.

The most attractive of such accidents involve innocent victims, since they represent the reader's image of his own innocence. It is the job of the news media simultaneously to violate and cosset that image. In this way, at the time of Daniloff's arrest, commentators wondered, "Why him?" But this spy-or-victim side of the story was essentially moot except for those interested in the intricacies of KGB surveillance of Americans in Russia. As far as Daniloff's

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fame went, the more arbitrary a victim he was, the better. Even though he may have done nothing more than inadvertently get caught in an elaborate East-West tit-for-tat, he took on the moral glamour of that special group of victims we admire for their Hemingwayesque grace under pressure. If we were caught in a similar fate and forced to stand up and be the center of attention, would we be able to carry it off as well as he—or might we even do it better?

The fact that Daniloff was a reporter not only helped publicize his case to the world (in ways no doubt unforeseen by whoever organized the snatch) but also made him a more appealing surrogate for the American audience. The basic message of any newspaper story is not the empathy demanded by fiction and poetry, but distance: I was there, you weren't; let me tell you about it. Reporters are primarily intermediaries, interpreters of the world for their audiences. Ostensibly the story is more important than the author. But long before the days of the New Journalism, with its tales of outlaw sensibility, the Anglo-American model of journalism included the adventurers Nelly Bly and H. M. Stanley, as well as the muckrakers Lincoln Steffens and Ida Tarbell.

If there is any distinction to be made between reporters and journalists, the self-effacing and the self-displaying, Daniloff would seem to have been in the more retiring category. More "normal" than "famous," he is a "regular guy" willing to give interviews to his fellows (even though some of the officials at *U.S. News and World Report* at first tried to keep his adventures more exclusively to themselves). On the whole, he comes off as the ordinary man standing tall, a kind of hero Americans always like. Only in this case, the hero wasn't defending his family or home or nation or even some general principle of democracy and justice. This time he was a pawn.

When Daniloff landed at Dulles airport, one of his most widely quoted lines, smilingly echoed by the administration, was "what a wonderful nation it is that will go all-out for a single individual." What he didn't realize was that he had become a *famous* individual, virtually a household word—and that made all the difference. For better or worse, he had been catapulted out of his position between the news and its audience into the curious world of fame, where the audience reasserts its power.

THE WORD "fame," in its root, meant being talked about by human beings, as "fate" meant being talked about by gods. Now it means being talked about by people who don't know you. Whenever that has happened, in the history of fame, the people talked about have been invariably flattened into what their audiences want them to be. Fame, then, which in the United States is usually considered to be the acme of individuality, in fact tends to de-individualize people, making them somewhat less than real at the same time that their applauding audiences (and perhaps themselves) think they've become something more. A famous person is less an individual than the representation of an individual, stereotyped and symbolized, and therefore treated in such a way that the actual person is obscured by the famous presence.

When we look at famous faces, we don't see what we see when we look at faces in our normal lives. We see cultural stereotypes of victimization and heroism, survival and wreckage. There's an intriguing U.S.S.R.-U.S. complementarity here. The Soviets tried to make Daniloff into a pawn in their game, and then were puzzled about why we bothered about this one guy. Meanwhile, by cranking up the machinery of fame to rescue this "single individual" from anonymously wasting away in a Soviet prison, we absorb him into our game, which threatens to make him equally trivial and anonymous.

"NICK USED TO cover the story. Now he is the story," said Ruth Daniloff to *New York Times* reporter Philip Taubman, just before their plane touched down at Dulles. There a great mob of reporters and photographers were readying their microphones, cameras, and tape recorders to welcome Daniloff in the style to which he had often contributed in the past and with which he was quickly to become if not accustomed, at least familiar.

One difficulty the abruptly famous have is the belief that they did it on their own. It's the "overnight success" syndrome, the Cinderella story: if the fairy godmother of fame touches you, well then, you probably deserve it. Everyone is a star waiting to be discovered, a diamond in the rough just looking for the right polisher to come along. Because modern fame has this kind of spiritual quality, the famous think they have something to say about everything—and often so does their audience. The question is not "What have you done to make me pay attention to you?," but "I'm paying attention to you. What is your secret power?"

Daniloff had an early onset of this urge, described by Taubman, when he sat in the U.S. Embassy commissary with three "colleagues" (Taubman stresses the professional affinity) shortly before he was allowed to leave Moscow. When asked what he was going to do when he returned, he said, "Maybe I will run for the Senate." The "colleagues" were silent. Then, says Taubman, Daniloff laughed "at the idea." As that collegial silence implies, perhaps Daniloff's peers, the journalists who so insistently and effectively presented the case for his freedom to the world, were already starting to get a little dubious about what their focus has created. And Daniloff was reciprocally losing a little perspective on the happenstance that put his name and face on front pages around the world.

An essential element in this kind of abrupt fame is that it is incommensurable with whatever action set it off. Yet it is part of the perhaps necessary delusion of the accidentally famous that they think all that's needed is a dose of normality—show you're a regular guy, and keep it all high-minded. So Daniloff went off to cover the Reykjavik summit and was somehow surprised that he couldn't get his work done because everyone wanted to interview *him*.

Yes, he's become the story, and Mrs. Daniloff's little aphorism implies another aspect of the American myth of fame: when you write the story, you're a subordinate, and when you are the story, you're the superior. Without com-

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menting on how this might rub Daniloff's colleagues a bit the wrong way, I might only point out that the Siamese twin of fame-as-freedom is fame-as-imprisonment, especially for people whose fame has little to do with who they really are.

For a while at least, Nicholas Daniloff, like any lottery winner or owner of a two-headed cow, will have to deal with a fame that exists not because he is an individual but because he happened to be at a certain place at a certain time. When, a few weeks ago, Daniloff was invited to help former Chief Justice Warren Burger officiate at Disney World festivities in honor of the bicentennial of the Constitution (and, fortuitously, the 15th anniversary of Disney World), Daniloff said, according to Lloyd Grove in the *Washington Post*, that there was an explicit understanding "that I would not be thrust face to face with Disney characters." Apparently, though, Mickey wasn't briefed about Daniloff's punctilio and wanted, like any fan, to get his handshake. He hadn't reckoned with Mrs. Daniloff, however, in her role as keeper of the flame. "Get that [expletive] mouse off the stage!" she roared.

Poor Mickey. He didn't realize that the Daniloffs, caught in the cogs of the fame machine, were desperately trying to draw the line between the "serious" fame of this "American hero" and the "trivial" fame of Mickey Mouse. Poor Daniloffs. They didn't realize that media fame creates the same kind of shell around all its victims. In fact, the person who plays Mickey can take off the suit and mask at night, while Nick Daniloff's unfortunately looks just like him. If the Daniloffs believe they can swallow the fame world and strain at a mouse, they are mistaken. After one has achieved a certain degree of fame, Mickey Mouse *has* to shake your hand. (The *Post* doesn't tell us whether Warren Burger also refused this mousification.) As the Disney World publicity director said plaintively, "Mickey Mouse is a very well respected personality in this country. We're very careful about who he appears with as well."

WHERE WILL it all end? The sufficiently cynical might well believe that under Daniloff's "regular guy" exterior lives a true Slavic self-dramatizer. What else could be the source of the calculatedly theatrical gesture of cleaning his Decembrist great-great-grandfather's gravesite on the morning of his release, as well as his later recitation of the verses from Lermontov? The manuscript detailing the ancestral history, no doubt with the inheritor's epilogue, has now been picked up by Houghton Mifflin for what the *Los Angeles Times* calls "a significant six-figure advance." America always steps up to pay for its famous sons and daughters. But it exacts a price from them as well.

Wole Soyinka, this year's Nobel laureate in literature, who had actually accomplished something for which he was being rewarded, still complained wryly that he was not prepared for the abruptness and volume of the fame that descended. He needed, he said, to go into fame training, like any athlete, to deal with it properly. That remark shows a lot more perspective on the impersonality of the process than the Daniloffs have been able to muster. The fame of Nicholas Daniloff, which served well to free him, is not about an individual or a hero, but about the idea of an individual and the fantasy of heroism. If he doesn't appreciate the difference, he may become as much a victim of his American freedom as he was of his Soviet jailer.

LEO BRAUDY

Leo Braudy is Leo S. Bing Professor of English at the University of Southern California. His most recent book is *The Frenzy of Renown: Fame and its History* (Oxford).

Isolationist interventionism.

IKE AT SUEZ

AT 5 p.m. on November 6, 1956, the commander in chief of the British and French forces fighting in and around Port Said was ordered to cease fire. The Suez operation, begun only eight days earlier in collaboration with the Israelis, with the immediate purpose of regaining control of the Suez Canal (which Nasser had nationalized three months before) and the hardly disguised hope of causing Nasser's downfall, was at an end. The administration of Dwight Eisenhower had put enormous pressure on Britain to withdraw. Russia too was baying at the three allies. There was not a joint American-Soviet stand, but the effect was much the same. For the first time Western Europe was opposed by the post-1945 superpowers.

On the 30th anniversary of the operation, the controversy is still bitter. There is plenty to argue about: the secret preparations; the justifications for the Israeli attack and subsequent British and French invasion; the British lack of nerve that turned a successful military operation into a retreat; and, of course, America's desertion of Britain and France and its hostility toward Israel. Suez was the most inglorious, even farcical, episode in Britain's decline after the Second World War.

It also was a major and self-inflicted defeat for American diplomacy. At stake was control of the Middle East. Britain and France (the junior partner) lost that control primarily thanks to America's readiness to undermine Britain's position—with absolutely no plans, political or military, to fill the vacuum. Many of America's troubles in the Middle East in the past 30 years may be traced to the ignorant, stumbling, blind folly of Eisenhower and John Foster Dulles.

The Suez crisis really began two years earlier, in 1954, when Britain agreed to evacuate the Canal Zone—without receiving any worthwhile assurances from Nasser about the defense of British and other Western interests. These interests included not just free use of the canal, but also

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Britain's ability to defend its influence and interests in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Eisenhower and Dulles hoped that pressure on Britain to give up the Canal Zone would encourage a friendlier attitude in Nasser toward the West. In fact, almost their only policy in the Middle East was from time to time to encourage this ill-defined friendliness in the leaders of random other Arab countries that caught their eyes. Even so they kept botching their own designs. One reason they agreed to sell arms to Nasser was Dulles's wish to keep the Russians out of the Middle East—which the British and French had done during the years of their influence. But the administration insisted that Nasser pay cash, so he turned to the Communists. In October 1955, a year before Suez, he bought from Czechoslovakia five times more hardware than he would have received from the United States, paying for it in Egyptian cotton.

The most remarkable switch in American policy was Eisenhower's decision, communicated to Nasser on July 19, 1956, to withdraw financial support for building the Aswan High Dam. (The decision was taken without consulting Britain, which was contributing 20 percent.) There appears to be no explanation for this about-face, except that it was election year and the proposed aid for the dam aroused the opposition of certain well-defined groups. A week later, with the British garrison gone, Nasser nationalized the canal. Eisenhower "had lost control of the situation," says his biographer Stephen Ambrose; in fact, he had never gained control, because his advisers never had a grip on the Middle East.

Israel by now had more than one *casus belli.* There were the continual raids across the Egyptian border, and when Nasser nationalized the canal, he closed it to Israel, the only nation denied its use. Israel's forces acted with expected swiftness and effectiveness, and gained most of their military objectives. Britain and France then issued an ultimatum to both Israel and Egypt, as the three allies had planned, demanding that they withdraw their forces from the Canal Zone. As a pretext for Britain and France to go to war, it could not have been more transparent, since Israeli forces were nowhere near the Canal Zone. When Nasser rejected the ultimatum, the Royal Air Force began its heavy bombardment of Port Said on October 31. Five days later British and French paratroopers landed round Port Said, and amphibious landings followed on November 5. The next day the cease-fire was ordered!

THE ATMOSPHERE in London during these weeks was bitter and frenzied. I can remember arguments between old friends and colleagues that were unbelievably savage. It all centered on the hapless figure of Anthony Eden. He had been physically weakened for some time—his intestines had stopped working, and after British surgeons failed to help him, he came to America for an operation. The surgeons inserted a strip of plastic tubing, leaving the melancholy thought that the only relic of the British prime minister that would survive decomposition under ground would be a piece of American plastic.

The contempt with which Eisenhower and Dulles treated Eden throughout the crisis probably owed something to his increasing derangement. (He threw an old ink stand at the distinguished military commentator Basil Liddell Hart, who was advising him on how to conduct the operation, and with ink spreading over his suit, Liddell Hart retaliated by shoving a wastepaper basket over the prime minister's head.) This certainly provided Eden's subordinates with an excuse to defect. Among the Cabinet ministers who supported Eden in planning the operation, and then deserted him in face of the American opposition and advised him to pull out a day after he had gone in, were Harold Macmillan, his chancellor of the exchequer (who within two months replaced him as prime minister), and R. A. Butler, his foreign secretary, never distinguished by his loyalty. About six months after the fiasco, I was at a small lunch with Butler, who had just visited Eden for the first time since he resigned, and said he was much better. I asked Butler whether Britain would have completed the job if Eden had been well during Suez. Butler replied, "Oh yes." He paused and then added, "But you can't stand by a sick man, can you?" The reply captures all the nastiness of Britain at the time.

THE RECEIVED opinion of Suez today is that it was an immoral and imprudent action, and that the Eisenhower administration was right to force a British withdrawal. This was overwhelmingly the attitude of the official and intellectual classes in Britain then, but there was one difference between these two bodies of opinion. Once the operation had begun, the official class (the high permanent civil servants) believed it should be carried to a successful conclusion. The intellectuals were full of moral passion and frenzied affirmations of principle. They still are today, judging by, among others, Christopher Hitchens, whose article in the Fall issue of *Grand Street* flagrantly distorts what actually happened.

The opponents of the operation, then and now, have made a song and dance of the fact that the three allies acted in collusion—a word intended to make their collaboration seem discreditable. Hitchens even calls it a "secret collusion." But the allies collaborated only in the way in which all nations must if they think such an operation is necessary. There is no public "right to know" a nation's military plans in advance. The righteous indignation of Eisenhower was particularly ingenuous. The collusion in fact had been transparent and clumsy. For some time before the operation was launched, American interceptors picked up heavy radio traffic between Britain and France, and the U-2s overflying the Eastern Mediterranean were sending back photographs that revealed major military moves. It was not the fault of the allies that Eisenhower misinterpreted this information, expecting an Israeli attack on Jordan.

The intellectuals' case, echoed in the public preaching of Eisenhower to the allies, evaded the great issue of power that was being tried in the Middle East. The sentimental moralism of the intellectuals, voiced again by Hitchens with such a sly pretense of honor, only represented their

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characteristic refusal to face the sometimes unwelcome responsibilities of power. Not notably pro-American on any other occasion, they welcomed Eisenhower's actions because they amounted not to an assertion of American power but to a meddling isolationism by which America refused to act effectively when it had stopped Britain and France from acting. Eisenhower had in effect given Russia an equal standing in the region.

In place of the realities of power represented by Britain, France, and Israel, Eisenhower and the intellectuals in Britain substituted an appeal to the United Nations. Eisenhower thought of the U.N. as an international court, delivering impartial judgments on the misconduct of great powers, whereas it is an arena in which individual governments try to advance their interests. But he also wanted "world opinion" behind America, a figment to which he seriously appealed in private consultations with his advisers as well as in public. This world opinion was more real to him than actual allies, as was another figment—"Third World opinion." To join with Britain against Nasser, he said, "might well array the world from Dakar to the Philippine Islands against us," as if there were one united "Third World" stretching round the globe, when even as it expanded with the dismantlement of the old empires it looked more and more fragmented. Not even the "United Arab Empire" that Nasser hoped to control could hold together.

Suez took place when Americans, having used every weapon in their power to force the pace of decolonization, became infatuated with myriad small states that succeeded the colonies. It was as a result of the forced British retreat at Suez that Macmillan accelerated the British withdrawal from its African colonies, culminating in his "wind of change" visit to Africa in 1959. Britain handed over power to the often thuggish leaders of new "nations" whose societies and economies were (and still are) pathetically fragile. The crime of the Eisenhower administration was in not realizing that if it encouraged rapid decolonization, it was creating a power vacuum in Africa, and again inviting Russia into a continent from which Britain and France had successfully excluded it.

HITCHENS SAYS that Eisenhower expressed his opposition to military action against Nasser with exceptional candor. This is not true. He and Dulles did see the dangers of Nasser, and even fitfully worried about leaving the Middle East to the inconstant Arab governments. Eisenhower often made quite bellicose statements encouraging the allies to look to their arms, and Dulles did not disguise his wish for the British and French to take the Middle East off his plate. Insofar as there was an American policy at Suez, it was an attempt by Eisenhower to attract support in America and the world for opposing the old colonial powers without accepting American responsibility to replace them. America would not have had to commit one soldier, ship, or aircraft, or even to supply Britain and France with arms. Once the British and French forces landed, the whole operation would have been over in a few days. But Eisenhower had already undermined the allies so completely that they stopped fighting in a day.

The most important lesson of Suez today is the revelation of how strong the isolationist impulse was even in Eisenhower, the great allied supreme commander of the Second World War. The kind of "interventionism" that is now often advocated by American conservatives and neoconservatives, and pursued with unwavering words and vacillating purpose by the Reagan administration, is only the reverse side of the coin of Republican and conservative isolationism before 1941. America can go it alone. It doesn't need to consult with allies, or to listen to them. Almost every "bold" step of the Reagan administration in foreign policy has been taken without consultation with its allies, or only a charade of consultation. The allies are informed afterward and expected to toe the line.

One of the marks of the Truman administration that preceded Eisenhower, and of the objectives and methods of men like Dean Acheson, was that they valued allies, seeking their cooperation and the benefit of their experience. Britain and France had that experience in the Middle East, which a Republican administration chose not only to ignore, but to flout. America has been paying dearly for the blunder ever since.

HENRY FAIRLIE

And the search for a center.

VATICAN WARS

IN NOVEMBER 1984, five days after Ronald Reagan's sweeping election victory, the American Catholic bishops published the first draft of a pastoral letter on the economy that seemed to challenge every economic policy the Reaganites held dear. Columnists and editorial writers began wondering whether the Catholic bishops, of all people, would turn out to be the last best hope of old-fashioned liberalism. For the last six months, the bishops have been back in the headlines. But the story this time is different. The Church is going conservative.

In August the Vatican, through Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, officially declared Father Charles E. Curran unsuitable to teach Catholic theology and demanded his removal from the Catholic University faculty. A few weeks later Archbishop Raymond G. Hunthausen of Seattle revealed that Rome had stripped him of many key powers, reassigning them to an auxiliary bishop newly chosen by the Holy See. At least a half dozen other measures taken against priests who raised unwelcome questions or sisters and lay Catholics expressing various degrees of disagreement with the Church's anti-abortion stance all pointed in the same direction. Rome was bent on enforcing what it considers

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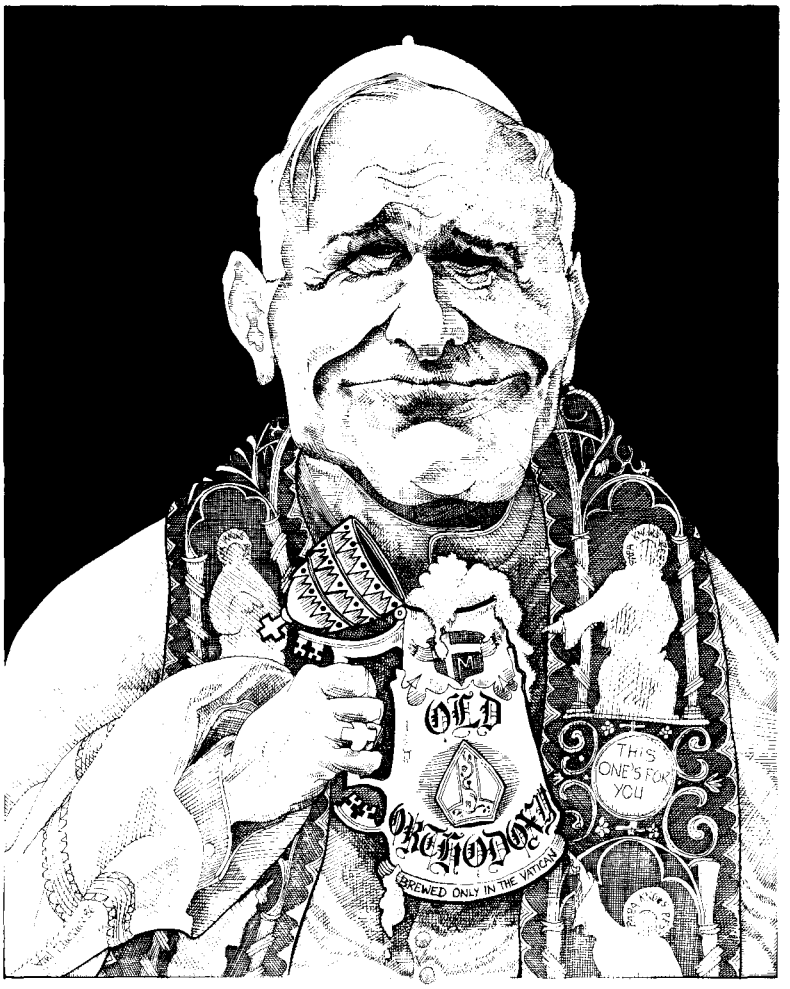
orthodoxy and disciplining anyone who stands in the way: theologian, lay person, even bishop. The liberal Church, riding so high only two years before, was about to meet its demise.

Anyone expecting a resolution of this liberal-conservative struggle at the annual meeting of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in Washington this November must have gone away puzzled. The economics pastoral, a moderate affirmation of the welfare state quite in keeping with Catholic social teaching but sharply opposed by free market enthusiasts, was roundly endorsed. The vote was 225 to 9. And this was not the only sign that the liberal Church was far from moribund. Again and again Cardinal Bernard Law of Boston, the U.S. churchman most closely identified with the Vatican "crackdown," was one of the leading contenders for elected posts in the bishops' Conference. He lost to moderates such as Archbishops John L. May of St. Louis and Daniel E. Pilarczyk of Cincinnati, chosen president and vice president respectively of the national Conference. But in other elections, Law also lost to Chicago's Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, a quiet liberal leader who headed the committee that drafted the peace pastoral of several years back, and to Archbishop Rembert G. Weakland, who oversaw the drafting of the economics letter and recently voiced strong criticism of Rome's current tendencies. And the bishops ignored the usual protocol, electing to a key post an auxiliary bishop, the liberal Joseph M. Sullivan from Brooklyn, in preference to the head of the Los Angeles diocese, Archbishop Roger M. Mahony. Mahony, a longtime champion of California's farm workers and an outspoken critic of arms spending and Reaganomics, has been beating the drums for tighter control over theological debate.



DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Mahony's mixture of views illustrates a larger problem in sizing up developments in the Church. The shorthand of "liberal" and "conservative," so often deceptive in politics, is even more confusing when imported into the world of religion. If the pope himself had written the economics pastoral, the result would have been, if anything, far more critical of capitalism. In terms of Catholic moral teaching, Charles Curran may be liberal on abortion and homosexuality, but his positions bear little resemblance to what passes as liberal stances in secular terms.

Nor can specific positions always be deduced from general predispositions. Last summer Father James Provost, a former president of the Canon Law Society of America, was nearly denied tenure at Catholic University for publicly raising questions about matters that the Vatican thought should be beyond discussion. Conservative objections to Provost were eventually fended off—with the help of New York's Cardinal John O'Connor. Yes, O'Connor is conservative (he was soon tangling with Governor Mario Cuomo), but that didn't prevent him from seeing the merits of Provost's case.

As a framework for describing Church conflicts, the chief rival to liberal versus conservative is dissent versus authority. It is equally Procrustean. Just before the bishops' meeting, the *New York Times Magazine* ran a cover feature on Father David Tracy, perhaps the most influential American doing work on fundamental Catholic theology. Although the article was part of a series on "The Creative Mind" in a variety of fields, it conveyed only the slightest flavor of Tracy's thought. It was headlined "A Dissenting Voice" and was accompanied by photos of Hunthausen, Curran, Ratzinger, Law, Weakland—all the usual suspects—even though Tracy and his work have little to do with the current disputes.

The dissent versus authority dichotomy sprouts stereotypes—stock images of religious persecution on the one hand and cultural radicalism on the other. No, Curran is not a proponent of "situation ethics," or (as one of his media defenders imagined) a teacher who engages "swinging youth at their own level of discourse." His writing and lectures reflect a deep belief in Church authority; they are highly—dare one say tediously—systematic and painstakingly filled with distinctions and qualifications.

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The gravest shortcoming of these dichotomous descriptions of recent developments in the Church is that they overlook the very real existence of a center. That is what has made the actions against Curran and Hunthausen so serious. What is at stake in the current dispute is not the victory of one pole or another—liberal or dissenting versus conservative or authoritative—but the survival of a certain notion of a center.

Curran's claim to stand within that center can be illustrated by looking at one of the frequently heard charges against him. The Church, it is argued, has a right to have its official positions taught in its own institutions. Removing a dissenter like Curran is nothing more than "truth in advertising." But no informed person has ever charged Curran with not fairly representing the Church's official teachings. He scrupulously presents both official teaching and his own and others' alternative formulations, noting the degrees of consensus each enjoys and the reasons why. Curran's arguments are certainly not beyond criticism, but they are calculated to take account both of established teaching and of the fact that establishing what is properly "Catholic" requires continual criticism and revision.

CURRAN, HOWEVER, did not command much attention at the November meeting of the bishops. Instead, the dominant issue was the plight of the fellow bishop, Raymond Hunthausen, whose claim to fall well within the Church's center was even stronger. To begin with, he is a bishop, one of those official teachers whose authority Rome has said it is defending against people like Curran. Hunthausen has declared in no uncertain terms: "I am not a dissenter from the Church's teaching." Though he has gained a national reputation of sorts for condemning the nuclear missile-bearing Trident submarines in Puget Sound, and by consequently refusing to pay a portion of his federal income tax, he always made clear that these were acts of personal conscience and not policy he proposed for his archdiocese. Indeed, Rome insists that his nuclear pacifism has nothing to do with the reduction of his powers.

The issue in Hunthausen's case is "pastoral judgment." How much leeway does a bishop have in upholding Church teaching when strict legality comes into tension with compassion and pastoral sensitivity? Can he reach out to the suffering or excluded even if his actions risk a blurring of official norms? Hunthausen put the question eloquently in the statement he prepared for his fellow bishops: "The Lord himself must have grappled with this challenge as He reached out with love and compassion to those weak in faith as well as to those involved in sin. Never did He compromise the truth He had come to reveal, but neither did He fail to extend to all He encountered the warmth and compassionate embrace of a loving God. That's the challenge I face day after day." Hunthausen's most controversial decision illustrated the problem. He allowed Dignity, a group of gay Catholics, to celebrate Mass in the Seattle cathedral during their national convention. But he also made a public statement reaffirming the Church's traditional strictures on homosexual acts.

There were at least two other issues raised by the Hunthausen case. One was whether questions about such "judgment calls" should be primarily reviewed by bishops at the local level—the National Conference, for example—or by the Vatican. The other was secrecy. Hunthausen was not allowed to see the specifics of the charges against him, and he had refused the "public charade" of covering with his name decisions that were out of his hands; that is why, to the irritation of Rome, he had resisted any reassignment of his powers and then made it public when it was done anyway.

Theologians like Curran and bishops like Hunthausen believe that open theological debate and local pastoral flexibility are the best ways to accommodate *both* liberal and conservative impulses. They apply to the Church something similar to Burke's dictum about the state: lacking the means of some change, it is without the means of its conservation.

Rome, needless to say, has a different notion of a viable center. The pope and Vatican officials such as Cardinal Ratzinger cannot help but recognize that the Church has changed both teaching and practice in very significant ways and even in very recent times. But in their view, change has to take place in a tightly controlled and practically invisible manner. Bishops may tolerate deviations from Church norms in practice but only in a context where the norms themselves are not being questioned. Theologians who find official teachings unconvincing or at odds with the Gospel should express their doubts privately or in cloaked terms. As one skeptical description of the process puts it: the Church moves from certitude to certitude without ever having passed through incertitude.

Each of these competing notions of a viable center (and here the terms liberal and conservative become unavoidable again) claims not to annihilate but to best preserve the values represented by the other. At the same time, each suspects that its competitor will inevitably set in motion a dynamic leading to an extreme. The conservatives will end by re-establishing the authoritarian, anti-intellectual fortress mentality that marked Catholicism before Vatican II. The liberals will end by retracing the steps of so much liberal Protestantism, trading away the distinctive claims of the faith for the pottage of secular politics and culture.

NEITHER VISION can back its claims with any degree of certainty. Conservatives point to declines in Church attendance, recruitment to the priesthood, and moral standards among young people as consequences of the "open" and "permissive" style of American Catholicism in the last decade. Catholicism, they point out, was actually flourishing in the United States in the 1950s in a way it hasn't since Vatican II. Liberals attribute these developments to other causes, including conservative neglect of the laity's experience in matters such as artificial contraception. The greatest wave of disaffection from the Church, they note, occurred in the wake of the 1968

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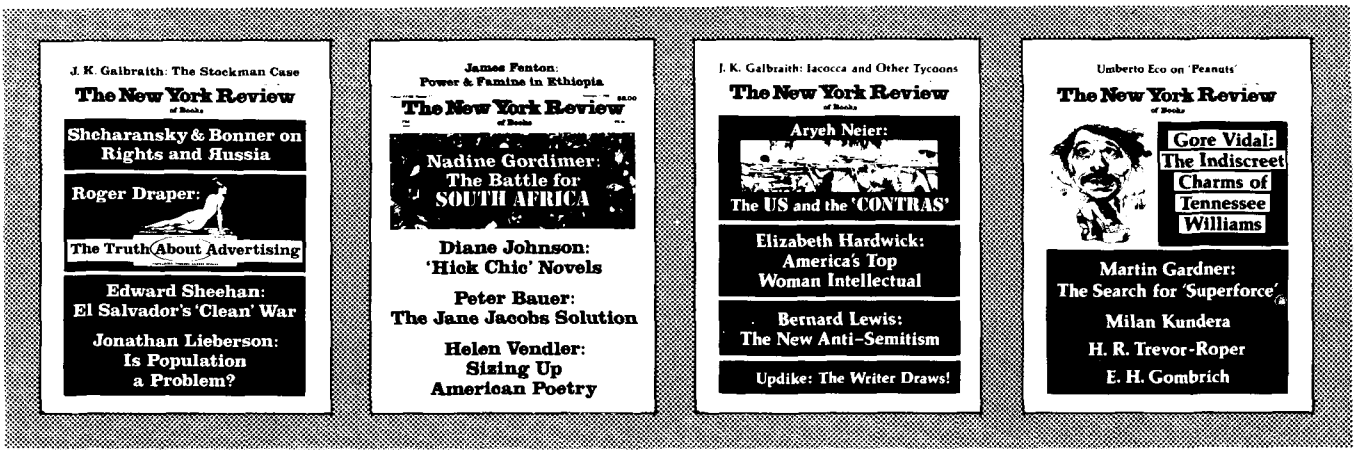
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papal reassertion of the sinfulness of contraception, and before the generation of post-Vatican II bishops was in place. A forthcoming book by George Gallup Jr. and Jim Castelli detects renewed growth in American Catholicism—but not, interestingly enough, in the more traditional Eastern big-city dioceses. In any case, say the liberals, the conservative strategy has already been tried—in Europe during the 19th and 20th centuries, where it produced empty churches, intellectual isolation, and cultural impotence.

Measures of religious "success" are, of course, notoriously unsatisfactory. In the end, each notion of a viable center probably rests less on what consequences it can promise for the future than on what image of God and the Kingdom announced by Jesus it seems to offer right now. Both conservatives and liberals have legitimate fears, however, about where the other notion might be leading. And there is probably more dialogue addressing differences between Catholics and other faiths or denominations than between different outlooks within the Church.

SO FAR the American liberal center is holding, but gingerly. Under Archbishops May and Pilarczyk, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and its public policy alter-ego, the U.S. Catholic Conference, will probably maintain their present staffs and policies: moderately liberal on economic and international issues, strongly anti-abortion, guardedly centrist on intra-Church conflicts. Barring a full-scale imbroglio with Rome, general continuity is likely for perhaps five years.

At the bishops' Conference, the signal to Rome was unmistakable: Back off, please; give us room to breathe. By all accounts, the executive-session discussion of the Hunthausen case, which occurred in the presence of the papal representative, was frank and even heated. Perhaps in compensation, the signal sent to the public was, well, wimpy. The more conservatively inclined administrative board had spent hours hammering out a statement that acknowledged the pain of the Hunthausen affair and then (*a*) declared that the Conference had no authority to judge such a conflict, but (*b*) managed to endorse, at least rhetorically, both the Vatican's procedure and its conclusion. This was a bit much for the full body of bishops. They agreed instead that the statement could be issued in the name of the outgoing president, Bishop James W. Malone, with the deletion of two references to the justice of Rome's proceedings, and with an offer of mediation from the Conference. These subtleties were understandably lost on much of the interested public, for whom the Malone statement, heavy with profusions of papal loyalty, sounded like something that left Hunthausen twisting slowly in the breeze. No doubt if the U.S. bishops had been around when Paul challenged Peter "to his face" (Galatians 2:11), they would have applauded Paul but excised the story from the New Testament.

The Hunthausen case, which remained unresolved after the meeting, may make the Vatican shy of such direct interventions. But it is also true that about a third of the bishops favor Rome's conservative alternative, and their numbers are growing. Moreover, the pope still has the power of appointment. In the past year, at least three major bishoprics were filled by men more conservative than their predecessors; another six to ten dioceses are either awaiting appointments or on the verge of falling open through retirement. On the other hand, the pastoral style of a Hunthausen and the insistence on theological reexamination of a Curran are by now deeply entrenched in the Church's "middle management." They can be rooted out but not without severe cost. Rome may believe that the pews are filled with traditional-minded congregants, and that tough discipline will draw a flood of willing recruits into the priesthood and other positions of Church leadership; but none of the empirical data bears out this belief.

ONE THEORY, held by neoconservatives who do not really welcome a full-fledged return to a highly disciplined, ideologically uniform Catholicism, is that Rome's recent actions only constitute a "whiff of grapeshot" that will sober the advocates of change without eliminating them. The viable center will be more viable if tested by a greater resistance. The pressures Rome has applied to liberation theology in Latin America, for example, have not destroyed the movement but probably made it stronger, more theologically serious, and more democratic.

The theory counts heavily on Vatican self-restraint. It musn't be forgotten that the liberation theologians pressed back. Leading members of Brazil's hierarchy demonstrated their solidarity with one of the chief objects of Vatican criticism, and the hierarchy as a whole seems to have insisted on the validity of Brazil's particular contribution to the Church universal. The American hierarchy, so far, has reacted somewhat more timidly.

No one really knows what impact all these developments are having on the mass of Catholics. But a much smaller group of observers, Catholic and non-Catholic, are watching the shifts closely. They recognize the weight that America's largest denomination can have in the culture. If the Church could develop a persuasive code of sexual morality, or inculcate habits of civic responsibility, or infuse the economy with a sense of personal vocations and communal responsibility, the whole society would be better for it. Catholics can be irked to get so much unsolicited advice from people who won't have to live personally with the consequences. (Norman Podhoretz, the editor of *Commentary*, can welcome the enforcement of staunch orthodoxy on Father Curran, but if the American Jewish Committee contended that truth could best be served by enforcing a parallel control over him, he would probably have long since resigned in disgust.) But a church that makes large claims is sure to have large problems. That seems to be one of the things that being Catholic means.

PETER STEINFELS

Peter Steinfels is the editor of *Commonweal*, an independent journal published by Catholic lay people.

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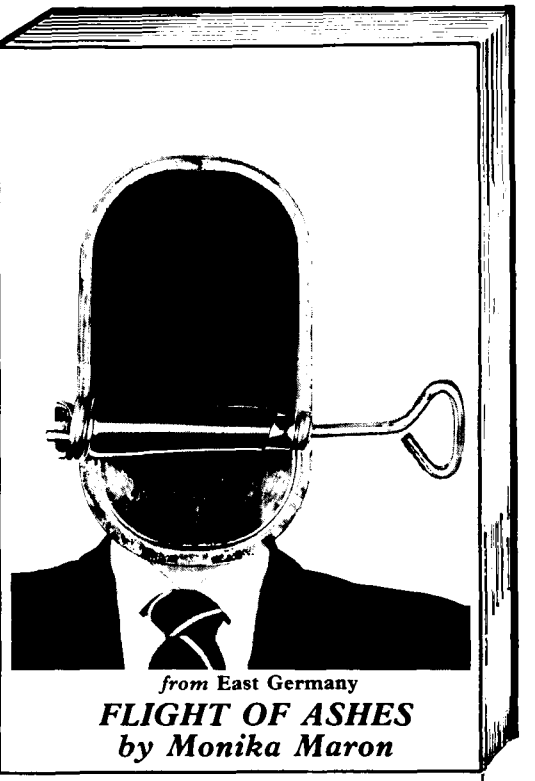

from East Germany
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by Monika Maron

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From Haïti comes Pierre Clitandre's *Cathedral of the August Heat*. His novel brings alive the epic of the New World's poorest who, once again, have made history. Clitandre's sweat-soaked humor "blends earthy realism with voodoo and Creole folklore...a marvelous apotheosis" says *World Literature Today*.

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What Jessica Lange didn't say about the perils of farming.

THE IDIOCY OF RURAL LIFE

BY JEFFREY L. PASLEY

> The bourgeoisie has subjected the country to the rule of the towns. It has created enormous cities, has greatly increased the urban population as compared with the rural, and has thus rescued a considerable part of the population from the idiocy of rural life.
>
> —Marx and Engels, *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*

> If we let Republican farm policies drive our family farmers off the land, then your food won't be grown by farmers whose names are Jones or Smith or Anderson. No, your food will be raised by Tenneco Corporation, or Chevron, or ITT.
>
> —Senator Tom Harkin, Democrat of Iowa

THE IDEA that people still farm for a living in 1986 is an alien and yet somehow romantic one, redolent of grandparents and "Little House on the Prairie." A 1986 *New York Times* poll reported that 58 percent of Americans believe that "farm life is more honest and moral than elsewhere," and 67 percent think that "farmers have closer ties to their families than elsewhere." Images of rural life dominate the "Americana" that passes for tradition in the United States. At a holiday like Thanksgiving, when we are supposed to give thanks to our Pilgrim ancestors and the "bounty" before us, we pay homage to the values embodied in the idea of the "family farm."

At one time, this reverence for farm life made sense. The United States began as an agricultural nation. In 1790, 93 percent of the American population worked on farms. Agricultural products made up 80 percent of exports. The Founders, knowing which side their breadbasket was buttered on, heaped extravagant praise on the nation's farmers. "Cultivators of the earth are the most valuable citizens," wrote Thomas Jefferson. "They are the most vigorous, the most independent, the most virtuous, & they are tied to the country & wedded to its liberty and interests by the most lasting bonds."

The "family farm" remained a powerful myth long after it ceased to be a political fact. "The great cities rest upon our broad and fertile prairies. Burn down your cities and leave our farms, and your cities will spring up again as if by magic; but destroy our farms and the grass will grow in the streets of every city in the country," thundered Populist leader William Jennings Bryan. Yet as the myth gained strength, Americans were actually leaving the farm by the millions. Though the number of farmers continued to grow until 1920, the cities grew much faster, and the percentage of the American population working in agriculture declined with every census after 1790. The figure dropped to 30 percent by 1910, and to three percent in 1985. As the country grew, it exposed its citizens to creature comforts and other opportunities to prosper more easily, which made it hard to keep the farmers down on the farm. As farmers sold out or quit, those who remained bought up their land. Average farm size increased from 152 acres in 1930 to 441 acres in 1985.

I grew up outside Topeka, Kansas, attended a rural high school that had an Ag-Science building but no auditorium, and graduated from a college in the Minnesota farm country. In my experience, the standard image of the farmer has more to do with urban romanticism than with reality. Yet when the most recent farm crisis hit the nation's front pages and movie screens in 1985, the "family farm" captured the national imagination. Journalists suddenly found the stuff of Greek tragedy in Ames, Iowa. "Beauty is a cruel mask," wrote Paul Hendrickson of the *Washington Post*, "when the earth rolls right up to the edge of the interstate, freshly turned. When the rosebud trees are bleeding into pinks and magentas. When the evening rain is soft as lanolin." And so on.

With the papers full of stories about farmers going out of business, committing suicide, or shooting their bankers, farm-state politicians and activists began to campaign for a program specifically to help "family" farms, a proposal that evolved into the "Save the Family Farm Act." Introduced in October by Harkin and Representative Richard Gephardt of Missouri, the bill would impose mandatory controls on the amount farmers could produce and the extent of land they could farm, and would force larger farmers to set aside a larger percentage of their acreage. The bill would roughly double commodity prices (followed by additional yearly increases), sharply increasing the cost of raw food products. A small price to pay, its proponents say, so that family farmers can afford to maintain their traditional way of life. For supporters of the bill, the question is not primarily economic. On humanitarian grounds, they want to preserve the family farm as a way of life. On social grounds, they want a Jeffersonian countryside of small, independent landowners. Yet when I asked Charles O. Frazier of the National Farmers Organization, which supports the Harkin bill, whether the measure might hurt farmers in the long run, he replied, "To hell with the long run, we're talking about running a business."

Farmers are just like everyone else. They want to make money and live better than their parents did—and better than their neighbors, if possible. Urbanites often confuse the folksy ways of some farmers with an indifference to material wealth and the refinements that it

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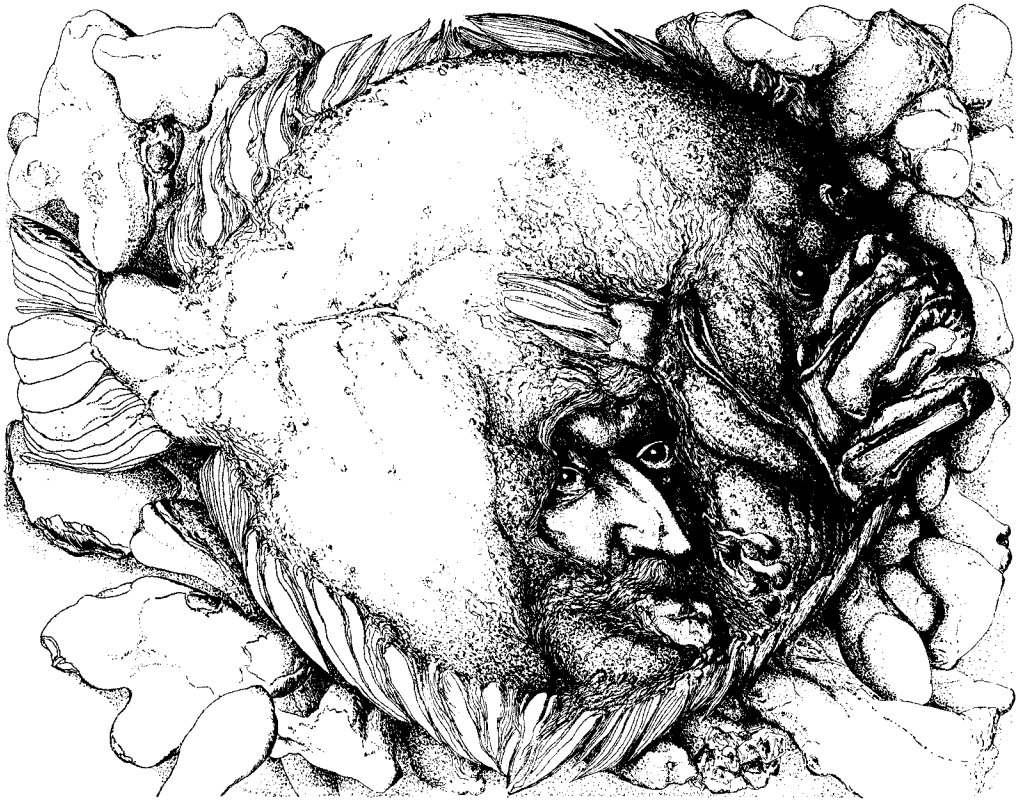

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brings. The difference between farmers and city-dwellers lies not in a different attitude toward money, but in different choices about what to spend it on. Washington lawyers want to make money to buy a BMW and a vacation in Paris. The average farmer may prefer a big pick-up truck with floodlights on top and a motor home he can take to Florida for the winter. Indeed, the young farmers who are in the most trouble today got that way by expanding their operations too quickly in the 1970s. Farmers aren't uniquely greedy, just ambitious like any other businesspeople.

IN ANY CASE, family ownership of farms is not in danger. Non-family corporations operate only 0.3 percent of the nation's farms, own only 1.6 percent of the farmland, and account for only 6.5 percent of total sales of farm products. Agriculture simply doesn't offer a big enough return to attract many large corporations. Though farmland has become concentrated in the hands of fewer landowners, more than half of the large farms are owned by families, in many cases organized as partnerships or family corporations. "The family farm today is grandpa, two sons, and some grandsons who all help manage the place. The family farm of the future is a family farm corporation. These are stronger operations than the old-style family farms," said Jim Diggins, vice president of Farmer's National Company, an Omaha farm management firm.

The USDA divides farms into five classes: rural residences ("hobby farmers"), small family, family, large family, and very large farms. The farm crisis has left the large and very large family farms relatively untouched. Because of their economies of scale, even when prices drop they can still make a profit. Large family farmers operate an average of 1,807 acres, hold an average of $1.6 million in assets, and clear an average income of around $78,000 a year; and they are located in areas where living costs are low. Families on very large farms hold an average of 3,727 acres and net an average annual family income in 1983 of almost $600,000.

What the Pa Ingalls fans have in mind are rural residences and small family farms, which usually occupy 300 acres or less. Although these small farmers make up two-thirds of the total, however, they do not depend on agriculture for their living. According to the USDA, their "off-farm income" has exceeded their "on-farm income" ever since 1967. The yeomen of 1986 till the soil only as a sideline, and make 90 percent to 100 percent of their income from jobs or businesses off the farm. So the "farm crisis" isn't impoverishing them.

In fact, just about the only ones really endangered by the current crisis are medium-sized family farmers. It is this group, which amounts to one-fourth of all farmers, whom the Save the Family Farm Act proposes to save. They are hardly what Jefferson had in mind. On average, they own about 800 acres with assets approaching $1 million. Despite their size, they are far from self-sufficient. These are the farmers, by and large, who depend on government subsidies. Their troubles lie in the basic economic facts of the institution. Unlike small farmers, who have other sources of income, or large farmers, who have diversified multimillion-dollar operations, the family farmer gets paid only when he sells his crops. In between harvests, he must borrow money if he is to stay in business and feed his family. In no other industry does a worker need to take out loans in order to keep his job. The farmer is at the mercy of the interest rate, as well the weather and the grain markets. They have the vulnerabilities of workers and businessmen with few of the benefits—neither employment security and benefits on the one hand, nor freedom and the possibility of lavish income on the other.

These family farmers occupy a precarious center between the larger and smaller operations. Their farms are big enough to require full-time work but not big enough to lower costs or allow them to take full advantage of new technology. In order to compete with the large farms, the family farmer has to invest in the same expensive machinery and chemicals. Because he has fewer assets, his debts are proportionately much higher. He often has to sell his crop when he needs to make a payment, rather than when the price is highest. His high costs relative to his size make his profit margin razor-thin when it exists at all.

Thus medium-sized family farmers rely heavily on the increasing value of their land to help them pay their debts and get new loans. While inflation plagued the rest of the country in the 1970s, family farmers experienced a boom, as food prices and especially land values climbed to unprecedented heights. When inflation slowed down in the 1980s, so did the farm economy, sending land values through the floor. The farmers who invested heavily in new land on the wave of rising values found themselves hopelessly trapped when the values fell. The moral of this tale cannot be missed: those family farmers' fortunes depended not on their farming abilities, but on land values, a factor out of their control. Their ownership of land made them only more dependent. According to the USDA, farmers that leased more land weathered the crisis better, since they had fewer debts to pay at inflated interest rates. The family farmer has always walked this economic treadmill. The United States had its first farm crisis, Shays's Rebellion in 1786, before it had a Constitution.

HOW, THEN, did American family farmers become, in Harkin's words, "the most efficient and productive in the world"? Family farmers can keep labor costs very low because the family provides the bulk of the labor. Family farms operate under vastly different labor standards than the rest of American industry. "Child labor laws do not apply to family farms because family farms must have child labor to survive," wrote Minnesota politician and family farm alumnus Darrell McKigney. "Twenty or thirty years ago farm families commonly had ten or more children. [With automation] today five or six is a more common size." From a very early age, family farm children participate in every phase of the operation, from

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work with dangerous heavy equipment to close contact with carcinogenic chemicals and disease-carrying animals. In numerous farm areas, so many children are taken out of school at harvest time that the schools officially close until the harvest is finished. Practices that would be outrageous at a textile mill suddenly become all warm and cuddly when they appear on the family farm.

Family farmers also achieve efficiency through a draconian work schedule that no self-respecting union would allow. "The farm family does physically demanding and highly stressful work at least 14 hours a day (often at least 18 hours a day during harvest season), seven days a week, 365 days a year without a scheduled vacation or weekends off," wrote McKigney. "The farmer must endure all of this without the benefit of a health plan, safety regulations, a retirement plan, workmen's compensation, or any of the benefits that most U.S. labor unions demand." Psychologist Peter Keller, past president of the Association for Rural Mental Health, pointed out that many farmers are permanently tied to their farms. A dairy farmer, for instance, cannot just take off for a two-week vacation and not milk his cows. "Farmers lose perspective on the other things in life," said Keller. "The farm literally consumes them."

And the family farm physically consumes those who work on it, too. According to the National Safety Council, farming is the nation's most dangerous job—more dangerous even than working in a mine. In 1983 farming clocked in at 55 job-related deaths per 100,000 workers, or five times the rate for all major industries combined. In 1984 Tom Knudson of the *Des Moines Register* published a Pulitzer Prize-winning series that cataloged the myriad health and safety risks run by farmers. Farmers working with powerful farm machinery face death or maiming by crushing, chopping, asphyxiation, or electrocution. ("As he reached for a stalk of corn dangling from the corn picker, Vern Tigges of Dexter felt a jolt. In the next moments in a fierce and frantic struggle with the machine, three fingers were ripped from his hand.") They may be poisoned by the nitrogen dioxide gas that accumulates in grain silos, or have their lungs permanently damaged from breathing the air in enclosed hog pens. They may be crippled by "farmer's lung disease," caused by moldy grain dust. They may develop leukemia from contact with herbicides used on corn. (Iowa farmers contract leukemia 24 percent more frequently than the average American.) Knudson wrote that recent health findings exploded "the myth of farming as the good life of fresh air and sunshine."

BUT WHAT ABOUT the benefits of good-old-fashioned-lemonade values and the supportive friendliness of a rural community? Though hard data is difficult to come by, many small towns appear to suffer from teenage pregnancy, alcoholism, and other social maladies at rates that are higher than average. One New England study showed relatively high suicide rates among farmers during a period antedating the farm crisis. And rural communities haven't always stood by their financially troubled members. Sociologist Paul Lasley's Iowa Farm and Rural Life Poll reported that a majority of Iowa farmers felt they received little or no support from their churches, neighbors, schools, or local voluntary organizations. At a "town meeting" with Representative Tim Penny, Democrat of Minnesota, in New Market, Minnesota, I heard farmers ridicule the idea of slightly higher property taxes to improve the area's meager school system practically in the same breath that they demanded higher subsidies for themselves. These things never happened on "The Waltons."

THE USUAL lesson gleaned from the facts of farm life is that there is nothing wrong with the family farm that higher commodity prices won't solve. Yet farm programs have come and farm programs have gone, and still farmers (and especially farmer's children) have left, for the simple reason that life is usually better off the farm. "It is a way of life, but so was the village blacksmith," says economist William H. Peterson. The urban "wage-slave" worker, for all his lack of "independence" and supposed alienation from his work, has some decided advantages over the rural yeoman. He has the security of a regular income, and definite hours set aside for his leisure. More often than not, the law guarantees the non-farmer a safe place to work, and protects him from the whims of his employer. The urban wage-earner has daily contact with a wide variety of other people, and access to cultural events and decent public services.

Proponents of Harkin-Gephardt and similar measures worry about where farmers will go once they leave the land. Yet former farmers do not just fade away. They have skills and work habits that many employers find attractive. (If they sell their farms, they will also have several hundred thousand dollars.) Growing farm management companies hire experienced farmers to manage large rented operations, under much more favorable terms and conditions than they could get on their own. Farmers working for others would demand better working conditions. Many states now have retraining programs for those who give up farming and want to learn a new trade or profession.

I saw the movie *Country* on a rainy Monday night in Topeka. Two farmers and their wives and a group of teenage girls were the only other people in the theater. The farmers complained loudly throughout the first hour of the film, and then left, shaking their heads in disgust. The girls sat through the final credits, sniffling at the plight of Sam Shepard and Jessica Lange. At a farm protest rally in Minnesota, I heard a song that went like this:

Now some folks say
There ain't no hell
But they don't farm
So they can't tell.

We should take the singer at his word. Tyrants from Stalin to Mao to Pol Pot have subjugated their populations by forcing them to "stay on the land." Given the conditions of life on the family farm, if ITT or Chevron or Tenneco really does try to force some family farmers off their land, they might well be doing them a favor. □

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STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Long Twilights

The Decline of the American Empire, topical though it sounds, is really an imprecise title. It ought to be at least *The Decline of the North American Empire*, since it is set in Canada; better, it ought to borrow Spengler's *The Decline of the West*. The characters, all French-Canadians of Montreal, are academics—history teachers at the university, most of them. One

The Decline of the American Empire
(Cineplex Odeon)
Marlene
(Alive Films)

of the group, a fortyish woman, has just published a book on her theory that a consuming concern with personal happiness is the omen of a society's downfall. She can't mean Canadian society alone: nothing is true of these people that isn't also true of their counterparts to the south and, short of the U.S.S.R., to the east.

Her theory is demonstrated by this film, a series of conversations—witty, frank confidences and duels—that reveal the characters' obsessive concern with personal happiness. "Personal happiness" here means exclusively "sexual happiness." The author supports her theory by her own part in the conversations and what they reveal of her. After a brief prologue, *Decline* begins with some women friends at a posh gym and with some men at a luxe country home near the city. The women, including a wife and a lover of one of the men and a woman who has slept with two of the men (all this learned later in flashbacks), discuss sex. The men, including a gay and a quite young man, also discuss sex. (A nice touch: it's the women who work out and shower, it's the men who cook as they await the women.) When the women arrive at the country place, *all* of them discuss their sex lives in various duets, trios, or ensembles, and what they say is either verified or commented on wryly by flashbacks. These dialogues are interrupted by the arrival of a rough type, the lover of one of the women, who sneers at their prattle and takes his woman off to her nearby cottage. By the end of the film we know a good deal about each character's sexual activities and attitudes. All that really happens in the present tense is that the wife discovers that her husband has slept with one of the women present, which plunges the wife into tears. (Odd, that: the wife has told us about—and we've seen in flashback—an orgy that she and her husband attended. Apparently it's the fact that she didn't know about his other extramarital sex that upsets her.)

If a film of this kind is going to hold us, it must be exceptionally well made because the talking heads have to be as visually satisfying as action; and the talk must be good. Regarding the first point, no question. Denys Arcand, who wrote and directed, is so talented that he proves it from the start without any strain. After a brief classroom bit, he dollies down a long hallway in the university, past people who cross the camera's path, until he reaches two women sitting on a windowsill. Both are teachers here. One is taping a radio interview with the other about her recently published book. (These two soon join two friends at the gym, then all proceed to the country.) The long opening roll is authoritative: the architecture tells us a good deal about the slick seriousness of the place, and the shot ends with two people who are also slickly serious. Further, the shot guarantees the excellence of Guy Dufaux's cinematography. We soon see that Arcand uses motion with the Kurosawa suggestion of unraveling mysteries: the camera follows one person until he or she meets another person, then the camera follows the second person; our eyes seem to be following a trail, even in a gym or kitchen.

The designer, Denis Sperdouklis, supplied extremely attractive clothes that underscore the characters' affluence and taste. (My memory of the first shot at the country house with two men is of their shirts.) Add the comfortably competent performance of all nine actors and the brisk neobaroque music, on Handel themes, by François Dompierre, and the total is filmmaking in itself delightful.

But then there's the talk as such. It's always bright (to judge by subtitles), sometimes sharp. But the virtually continuous discussion of sex never opens new insights, either of physical experience or of thought on the subject. Well-handled though the talk is, it's all more or less familiar. This kind of sex talk is part of modern parlance: Arcand merely concentrates on it. He may have been trying to place his screenplay in the line descended from *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, with the implicit observation that this talk is now bourgeois, not aristocratic; but the result, though never tedious, doesn't leave us with much enlightenment at the finish. Arcand has used his exceptional filmmaking gifts to bolster a set of neatly tuned, chic banalities. Well, let's grant Arcand a subtlety. Perhaps it's not only obsession with personal happiness that augurs a society's downfall: perhaps downfall is also predicted when there's nothing new to say about that obsession.

FILMS WORTH SEEING

The Color of Money. Martin Scorsese gives this sequel to *The Hustler* near-irrational heat. Paul Newman does his best with a role that he has outgrown. The script, for all its pungency, is lax. (Reviewed 11/17/86)

Ménage. Gerard Depardieu makes this anti-conventional comedy leap. Only when the story begins to worry about logic does the film sag. But acceptances about sex and society take a drubbing en route. (11/3/86)

Otello. Franco Zeffirelli and Lorin Maazel brazenly abridge Verdi's masterwork by about 30 minutes. But they bring us splendid performances by Placido Domingo and Justino Diaz. (10/6/86)

Sid and Nancy. This sordid tale of the punk rocker Sid Vicious and his girlfriend is turned into a gripping view of an avenue to hell. Good acting, writing, direction. (10/27/86)

SK

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What becomes a legend most? Not furs, after a certain age, but veils. Marlene Dietrich, one of the shrewdest self-managers in film history, understands this well. Maximilian Schell pleaded with her to appear on camera in his documentary about her, but she refused. How right she was. We hear her throughout, speaking in a baritone that itself seems to scoff at her mezzo-soprano days; she comments frankly, humorously, impatiently, warmly; but all we see of her is in clips from her films, from videotapes of her concert appearances, and from newsreels.

Schell has capitalized on his handicaps. *Marlene*, instead of being a routine retrospective documentary, is a film partly about the attempt to make this film. Dietrich wouldn't even allow him to photograph her apartment: so he built a duplicate in a Paris studio, left the set somewhat incomplete, and used it to heighten her mystique. He includes conversations between many of his associates as they decorate the set or work at the editing table. These elements, combined with the Dietrich clips, create an air of activity just outside the shrine.

That rich, rumbly voice of Dietrich today, answering or rejecting Schell's questions, superbly sustains and justifies everything we see. Some of her statements are outright fibs. She says she has no sister; then we see a photograph of herself and her sister as children. She repeats the story that she went straight out of drama school into *The Blue Angel* (1930), but we see clips from some of her silent films. Besides, she was a working actress in the Berlin theater, was well publicized in German magazines, and was first seen by Josef von Sternberg in a play. (I've been told that she had previously played Lina Szczepanowska in Shaw's *Misalliance*, not a part likely to be given to a tyro.) But she certifies what Sternberg says in his autobiography about the way she got her part in his film. ("As Fräulein Dietrich sat in the office late that afternoon she made not the slightest effort to intensify my interest.") She says she got the role of Lola by not trying for it, by being "a snotty [*schnüfflich*] Berlin girl." Later, when Schell refers to her fabled sex appeal, she says, "*Quatsch*" ("Nonsense"—a word she uses often). She says she was only "*schnüfflich*." In a way, the clips bear her out. Granted her ivory beauty and Sternberg's masterly lighting of it, it was her disdain that made her irresistible. □

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EDWARD ROTHSTEIN ON MUSIC

Let "X" Equal X

"The white man *by nature* wants to murder off the black, brown, and yellow," preached Malcolm X. "You're not using the right language when you say the white man. You call it the devil. When you call him devil you're calling him by his name, and he's got another name—Satan; another name—serpent; another name—snake; another name—beast. All these names are in the Bible for the white man."

During the years when he spread this teaching, Malcolm X was not being metaphorical about the "blue-eyed devil"—as one might have imagined from "X (The Life and Times of Malcolm X)," the much discussed opera about the black nationalist figure that received its world premiere (final version) at the New York City Opera earlier this fall. The teaching of the Black Muslims, related by Elijah Muhammad and communicated by Malcolm X, was that there were not just social reasons—slavery and prejudice—for the suffering of the black man in America. There was a *metaphysical* explanation. The white man was quite literally the devil. In an intricate, bizarre theory of origins, whites were portrayed as freaks produced through genetic engineering on the primal black race by a mad scientist named Yacub. The whites were primitive creatures, in this account, born out of perverse racial selection and the murder of black infants. They were so animal in nature that they walked stooped over, living for generations in caves in Europe until a man named Moses led them out of the caves to rule over the blacks. Whites could sustain that rule only by using all the techniques of a science called "tricknology" that Yacub had passed on to his genetically bred creations.

In fact, from Malcolm X's autobiography and his speeches (four have just been republished by Seaver Books as *The End of White World Supremacy*) it is clear that he believed the Bible to be the tendentiously written history of the white man's evil. The Bible, in his view, is the story of the usurpation of the black's superior position through deceit and "tricknology." The Jews were not incidental figures in this still-continuing biblical drama; Malcolm taught that the Jews "know how to rob you, they know how to be your landlord, they know how to be your grocer, they know how to be your lawyer, they know how to join the NAACP and become the president. . . . They know how to control everything you've got."

The appeal of Islam, in Malcolm X's vision of it, was that it could displace the Bible and the whole Judeo-Christian heritage, which were imposed upon the African slaves in this country. The correct spiritual image for black deliverance was not Moses leading the freed slaves into the promised land, but the restoration of prehistoric independence and strength. The X in Malcolm's name, as in the names of other believers, stood for the unknown African name that had been stolen from the black man and replaced with a slave name (Malcolm's was "Little"). Elijah Muhammad's prediction was that the 6,000-year reign of Yacub's white race was about to come to an end; soon the African names would be restored, and the black nation would rise again. But this could not come to pass with the devilish, co-opting assistance of the white man. In Malcolm X's view, anyone (including Martin Luther King) who taught the Christian morality of turning the other cheek and loving the enemy was "a traitor to the Negro." The alliances Malcolm demanded were absolute. He never seemed aware of the long history of the Arab slave trade or of the internecine African tribal wars that made race and religion more complex. The black and the white were not races but divisions of the universe.

One doesn't find such material in the opera, though, because it would add ambiguities, shift the dramatic accents, even raise some questions about contemporary orthodoxies. It would also reveal something of the desperate state of black psychology during the 1950s. The opera plays it safe; it wants Malcolm to be as simple as the plot, a bland cartoon. The music, by Anthony Davis, a 35-year-old classically trained jazz composer; the story, by his 33-year-old brother, Christopher; and the libretto, by Thulani Davis, their 37-year-old second cousin, have gone through three previous incarnations, beginning at the American Music Theater Festival in Philadelphia in 1984. The opera has been expanded, contracted, reworked, refined.

The intention is never less than clear. It is to present episodes in the life of a martyr who gave birth to a movement. Each scene is a milestone in the life of Malcolm X and is presented in schematic form, its point made with singular determination. The set is composed of "found" objects—used suitcases, chairs, tables—maneuvered about a battered back-lot space to create a backdrop for the scenes. The dramatization, directed and choreographed by Rhoda Levine, treats characters in much the same way, with the same actors playing different supporting roles, except for white cops with billy clubs, who are ever-present thugs. Events are simplified to the point of misrepresentation. In the first scene, Malcolm's mother goes mad on hearing of the murder of his father by whites in Lansing, Michigan, and the children become wards of the state. In the second, Malcolm is taught the street life by a character named Street. In the third, Malcolm, imprisoned for robbery, delivers the only extended explanatory aria. Then, in successive scenes, come his conversion to Black Muslim belief in prison, his preaching in Harlem, his conflict with Elijah Muhammad after Malcolm commented with some bitterness on the Kennedy assassination, his pilgrimage to Mecca during which he was exposed to orthodox Islam, his assassination after his return. The scenes move with just that dutiful regularity.

"X" thus resembles in form and intention (and, indeed, musical style) Philip Glass's opera "Satyagraha," which premiered in 1980, and which divided the political life of Mahatma Gandhi into similarly schematic episodes. Glass's stylized scenes, accompanied by minimalist meditative patter, were actually indirect invocations of the political battles of the 1960s, each scene having its implied but never stated modern counterpart, until the opera ended with an explicit parallel—a slow motion assassination of Martin Luther King enacted as Gandhi sings. In "X" no implied parallels are necessary, since these were all primary events of the period—even Malcolm's spiritual pilgrimage to the East; the ending could be exactly the same, showing a black leader gunned down in slow motion. The difference is, of course, that Malcolm's message was precisely the opposite of Gandhi's passive resistance (that was why Malcolm called King a "traitor"). In fact, Gandhi's killer—a radical Hindu objecting to com-

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promise and tolerance and nonviolence—was more analogous in spirit to Malcolm himself. But if "Satyagraha" took on cult status because of the congruence of its implied messages with the beliefs of its intended audience—the politics of the countercultural generation—"X" has done much the same thing, winning rave reviews (along with tactfully tepid criticism) and bringing a specific audience, in this case largely black, to the New York City Opera for the first time.

IN FACT, since the opera was more concerned with invoking icons than with developing drama, it practically required the listener to bring appropriate emotional baggage. In Malcolm X's remarkable autobiography (written with Alex Haley) there is a stunningly detailed account of the daily life of a man who could first carry three guns as he hustled the prostitution and drug markets, and then, in prison, school himself by studying the dictionary, copying it out page by page. The closest the opera got to this contrast was Malcolm's donning of eyeglasses in the later acts. Nothing developed internally from the story. How, for example, from the opera alone, could one begin to understand the extent of Malcolm X's fury? All one had to go on were the white cops, a few balletic assaults, and a rather pasted up first scene showing his mother going mad.

The Black Muslim movement also remains a complete mystery in the opera, as does the assassination. According to the autobiography, a contract was taken out on Malcolm's life by the Black Muslim leader Elijah Muhammad. In the opera, there is little motivation for the conflict between the two men other than Malcolm's famous comment about President Kennedy's assassination ("The chickens are coming home to roost"), made here to a group of badgering reporters, to which Muhammad objected. But that was just an excuse for the impending break over Malcolm's own growing power and over Muhammad's corruption and dissolution, which, again according to the autobiography, included his siring of a number of illegitimate children. The opera absolves Elijah Muhammad of everything except jealousy and excessive vigilance, even staging the assassination so that the FBI is ambiguously implicated. The truth would have left more shadows over all the characters; but shadows are just what are deliberately eliminated.

Moreover, the ghetto life portrayed by the stylized libretto is much less raw and poignant than in Malcolm's own telling. The ruthless hustle, the amoral contemplation of victim and victimizer, the drug deals and pimping, the lye-treated conked hair and zoot suits and number running, so explicitly etched out in the autobiography and so fundamental to an understanding of what Malcolm was reacting to, are all so much picaresque gesture in the opera. "X" is a message opera directed at those who already believe, presenting very little in the way of unpleasantness. So: no ghetto, no Muslim ideology, no Muslim scandal, no hypnotic demagoguery—no fire this time.

IT IS, OF COURSE, quite possible to "invent" a Malcolm, as the Davises undoubtedly did, and still create a dramatically potent opera, but the conflicts and the passions must be made as vivid and vital as the ideological beliefs. After all, opera has long been a politically engaged art, from Mozart's *Figaro* and Beethoven's *Fidelio* to Puccini's *Tosca* and Berg's *Wozzek*. But in the grand tradition of political opera, the drama, through music and plot, is made fundamentally human rather than fundamentally political. One experiences the abstract principles through feeling their embodiment (and their embattlement) in music and character. But in "X" there is finally no character. As for the music itself, the irony is that the one point at which it comes to life is when it is least serious: it begins to suggest other than dutiful patter when Street gives a nihilistic tutorial to Malcolm, à la Gershwin's Sportin' Life. The crap shoots, the hustle, the zoot stance: it was all "style." The music is jazzy, playful, never solemn. "If you want some, take it," Street sings. "If you don't know, fake it." (It took Thomas Young, who sang the part, to solemnize the role: "What is the difference," he said in an interview, "between that and the prevailing corporate mentality in this country today?")

But for the most part, straining at the message, Davis's music sounds like a composition student's combination of jazz, swing, minimalism, Berg, and Stravinsky. When Malcolm's mother goes mad, the patter never illuminates her words (for all the music's supposed formal intricacy). When Malcolm preaches, the music is just an annoyance, attempting to stir passions without recourse to rhetoric; one would never guess from this opera that Malcolm X was a strong and stormy speaker. In fact, "X" is more frustrating musically than it is dramatically. It accepts the drama as given and plays along.

The weakness of the music, in fact, makes the point of the opera seem still more tendentious. The result is a picture of Malcolm without the X. He is presented as a slightly more serious version of Jesse Jackson, and not at all as a forerunner of Louis Farrakhan. "We must get our people off of dope," Malcolm says, "off alcohol, off the welfare rolls. We must *rebuild* the black family, and our communities, ravaged by despair." Malcolm is the angry but reasonable liberator of the black man, the patron saint of contemporary black liberalism.

MALCOLM'S STRENGTH, of course, did indeed come from the fundamental truth he was speaking about the debilitating history of slavery and the dissolution of a culture—a truth that underlay his hatred and his bizarre theology. His power derived from his prideful inversion of the white racist's vision of blacks—a gesture that was of crucial importance for his audience. And he surely influenced the direction of black political culture. His demands for discipline and self-reliance were precursors of the rhymed and mannered slogans of Jesse Jackson; his vision of the international victimization of blacks, and his idealization of the Islamic world, prefigured the sentimental Third Worldism of certain contemporary black leaders; his demands for reparation and restitution anticipated the philosophical foundations of affirmative action.

And yet Malcolm was not fundamentally a political figure. Far from representing intellectual and educated and assimilated elites, as did other black leaders, he spoke with all the neuroses and nerve of one who had lived the life of the street and had absorbed in his youth the thinking of such early black nationalists as Marcus Garvey. The rawness of his experience, combined with a charismatic brilliance, made Malcolm at once dangerous, formidable, and weird. His vision was apocalyptic, cosmological, absolute. From a life of dissolute corruption, Malcolm turned to extravagant puritanism. From conked hair, he turned to the African past. From calling himself Satan in prison, he became the cleansing angel.

Malcolm's final conversion to ortho-

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dox Islam may even have made him, had he lived, a more political figure, since it led to a nearly complete re-evaluation of his position, even a temptation to re-write parts of his autobiography. He was quoted by Gordon Parks as saying just before his death:

> I did many things as a Muslim that I'm sorry for now. I was a zombie then—like all Muslims—I was hypnotized, pointed in a certain direction and told to march. Well, I guess a man's entitled to make a fool of himself if he's ready to pay the cost. It cost me 12 years.

At the New York City Opera it barely cost three hours, but the real-life "cost" is never taken into account.

This is unfortunate, because of the riches, operatic and otherwise, that might have been. This might have been an opera that took Malcolm seriously. We learn from Alex Haley that when Malcolm tells in his autobiography of playing Russian roulette with a loaded pistol to intimidate his partners in crime, he is only faking—first fooling his partners, then fooling the reader. What is not a bluff, however, is the continuing resonance of the swerves and ideas of Malcolm X for race relations in this country. But "X," like much political art, serves to confound rather than reveal.

Movers And Shapers

The Peopling of British North America: An Introduction by Bernard Bailyn

(Knopf, 177 pp., $16.95)

Voyagers to the West: A Passage in the Peopling of America on the Eve of the Revolution by Bernard Bailyn, with the assistance of Barbara DeWolfe

(Knopf, 668 pp., $30)

In its Statue of Liberty issue last May, *New York* magazine ran a piece by Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan under the title "What Wretched Refuse?" In the space of a few hundred words Moynihan went after what he called the "myth of misery and degradation" as it has been codified in Emma Lazarus's now-sacred refrain about the "tired," the "poor," and the "huddled masses" who settled America. "Nonsense," said the senator, who dismissed this version of our immigrant history as just a sentimental story about our collective origins. Modern America, on the contrary, was settled by "extraordinary, enterprising, and self-sufficient folk who knew exactly what they were doing, and [were] doing it quite on their own."

There have been many instigations in the last year to reflect on the continued appeal of that story, and a few provocations like Moynihan's to think about alternatives that promise to free us from it. If we act on any of these opportunities, we may be startled to realize that despite an enormous expenditure of scholarly energy over the last 50 years, and despite the current explosion of literary and historical work in the field of ethnic studies, there are no grounds for believing that the appetite will soon cease for myth over history. Not least for this reason, the appearance of Bernard Bailyn's new work on what he calls "the peopling" of North America is a scholarly event of more than usual interest. Bailyn has set out not merely to recover the material circumstances of some representative human beings who transported themselves from the Old to the New World in the period before industrialization, but, more importantly, to test the limits of our capacity to understand their motivation. His work, of which we now have the prefatory volume, *The Peopling of British North America: An Introduction*, and the first large installment, *Voyagers to the West: A Passage in the Peopling of America on the Eve of the Revolution*, is a grandly conceived attempt to employ the newest techniques of historical research (notably computerized demographic analysis) to achieve an old purpose: the recovery of a people's mentality from beneath the layers of myth and received opinion that have obscured it.

Bailyn's specific ambition in this new work, if seen in the light of his previous interests and methods, is itself a piece of news. He is one of the few living American historians whose own development is a matter of compelling interest. He has been publishing for more than 30 years and has, in certain respects, carried the training he acquired at the hands of his great Harvard predecessors Samuel Eliot Morison and Oscar Handlin (whose work in colonial and immigrant history Bailyn has powerfully combined) into a new era of historical writing.

What interested Bailyn in his earlier work—from *The New England Merchants in the Seventeenth Century* (1955) through *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (1967) and *The Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson* (1974)—was the possibility of capturing, as if in slow motion, the emergence of new cultural forces that both contemporaries and historians had missed because of the speed and obscuring naturalness of their adoption. To this end, Bailyn developed in the '60s his concept of ideology as a powerful and detectable source of change. He felt that his forerunners in the field, such as Arthur Schlesinger Sr., had erred in regarding the pamphlet assault on Britain during the imperial crisis as merely an instance of propaganda—as the strategic manipulation of the popular mind by a sophisticated elite—rather than as the ingenuous expression of a whole culture's burgeoning fear. Ideology was more than propaganda, Bailyn maintained, because "it articulates and fuses into effective formulations opinions and attitudes that are otherwise too scattered and vague to be acted upon."

Yet Bailyn was careful to deny ideology any "autonomous" power in the determination of events. "It can only formulate, reshape, and direct forward moods, attitudes, ideas, and aspirations that in some form, however crude or incomplete, already exist." Thus, the highly influential *Ideological Origins* described the seizure by a whole people of a vocabulary that allowed them to understand—and to repudiate—a series of economic and political events that had previously revealed to them no coherent meaning. "The historian's . . . real task," Bailyn had written a few years earlier in his ground-breaking book on education in the early republic, "is to describe the dawning of ideas and the creation of

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forms—surprising, strange, and awkward then, however familiar they may have become since—in response to the changing demands of circumstances." What had been in the early 1760s a swirl of inarticulate resentments against British "oppression" became, by the mid-1770s, an effective catalog of grievances upon which the possibility of revolutionary action could be advanced, and which would eventually furnish part of the text of the Declaration of Independence. The result was nothing less than the birth of a new world—a world built on republican premises about the corrupting effects of power, and on the virtue of an independent people.

NOW, IN *Voyagers to the West*, Bailyn again wants to "probe discontents and ambitions, perceptions, and understandings"—this time specifically those of the people who made up the colonial migration in the years before the Revolution—in order to grasp "the attracting forces as well as the propelling" ones that brought them to the New World. He is, in other words, in search of their mentality. *Voyagers to the West* thus focuses on roughly the same moment that Bailyn had previously examined, and reveals again what is in his view a major shift in the underlying forces of modern history. But it is a resolutely different book from *The Ideological Origins* because, among other reasons, it gives virtually no attention to the role of political ideas in the lives of the people with whom it is concerned. The Revolution as an intellectual event has disappeared (along with the public leaders who fomented it), whereas the people who lived through it, or at least several thousand of them, are now scrutinized with an almost ferocious precision. There is a sense in which Bailyn is offering his long-awaited response to those who criticized him 20 years ago for focusing exclusively on an articulate "elite" at the expense of what one historian called "dirty people with no names." Here he is writing social history with a vengeance. Still, despite the intensity and thoroughness of *Voyagers to the West*, it does not finally discover any collective transformation of sensibility—the sort of discovery that made Bailyn's earlier work so valuable.

The new book begins with the proposition that in the age of exploration and of the first settlements the flow of immigrants to America was essentially a spillover from the processes of internal European migration:

> The North American Colonies were simply another destination available to a people in motion. . . . The Atlantic became a highway like the Great North Road, and a highway rather easier to cross, despite all the dangers of ocean voyages, than the land passages of the British Isles. People learned to move west naturally, just as they moved north, south, and east, seeking employment, security, and a hopeful future.

America was, to be sure, a novel destination throughout most of the 17th century, one requiring a somewhat different order of personal decision on the part of those who ventured across the ocean than, say, on the part of those who moved from country to city within Britain. But the existence of the American refuge, Bailyn suggests, made no fundamental difference to the pace or direction of European social development. This generalization no longer holds by the later 18th century. By then "the presence of a powerful American magnet" had begun to exert a significant influence on European life, an influence that gradually increased "to that point where it shaped the patterns of European domestic mobility." This change is the starting point for Bailyn's investigation.

IF THE BOOK were written in strict fidelity to Bailyn's former criteria for identifying historically significant change, it would be largely a book about Britain. And so, in some respects, it is. Many of its best pages are devoted to narrating the slow dawning of a central historical fact—the fact of America's new impact on the life of Britain—upon the British bureaucratic mind. By the early 1760s a few alert public officials were beginning to realize that the flow of British emigrants to America was having serious social consequences at home. (Bailyn's chief example is the Earl of Hillsborough, who was president of the Board of Trade in 1763 during the issuance of the proclamation that was meant to close the trans-Appalachian west to unlicensed emigrants, and who, five years later, was secretary of state for the colonies.) The trend throughout Britain toward commercial agriculture, land enclosure, and higher rents for small and middling farmers—major factors in the disruption of traditional rural life at least since the reign of Elizabeth—was quickening.

Increasingly, the voices of highly articulate observers, ranging from detached cultural critics such as Samuel

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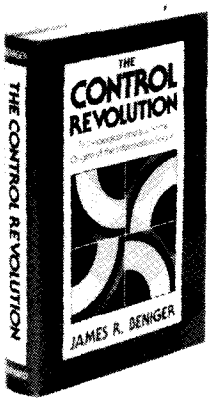

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Johnson to landowners and manufacturers who were personally alarmed by the prospect of fewer workers and dwindling markets, were being raised to warn of a coming dissolution in the structure of British society. In the Scottish Highlands, for instance, discouraged farmers were removing themselves and their families to what was being advertised (by absentee land speculators and their agents) as the fertile American garden. By 1773, after striking Scottish weavers threatened to lead their fellow workers to America, some British officials had realized that the lure of America was beginning to threaten Britain's labor supply—or at least its docility. Even the established practice of transporting convicts to the colonies was no longer carrying as much threat as promise. The British establishment, at last, was coming to realize that something had to be done to stanch the flow of emigrants. In 1774 the Privy Council prohibited further distribution of crown land in America by outright grant, and a movement gathered strength (effectively opposed by America's virtual ambassador, Benjamin Franklin, and by certain parliamentary interests) to curb emigration directly by the imposition of high registration fees.

IT IS AT this point that Bailyn veers from the written records of manifold British anxiety and discloses what is to be his chief "text": the statistical survey of emigrants that the British authorities conducted from late 1773 to early 1776. This was an extraordinary effort to identify systematically the age, sex, occupation, place of origin, family status, destination, and, most important, reasons for embarking, of every person leaving Britain for the colonies. And this document is to provide us initial access to the experience of those who left. Bailyn acknowledges, as he must, that this register, despite its unprecendented scale and thoroughness, leaves a good deal to be desired as a basis for statistical analysis, much less as an entrance into human experience. Its most obvious limitation as the foundation for a study of "the peopling" of colonial America is its restriction to England and Scotland. It tells nothing, for instance, about the flow of populations from Africa, Ireland, the Swiss and German principalities, or the Low Countries. More narrowly, it exhibits large differences in the compilation procedures followed by English and Scottish customs agents. There is palpable frustration in Bailyn's remark that the Scottish data at least "contain valuable flashes of illumination of the human reality of emigration and revelations of the gaps and technical problems in the data that otherwise would not be known."

Bailyn is careful to disclose his own methods of analysis and interpretation—pointing out, for example, the inevitably troublesome ambiguity of the queries about vocation and place of origin. A young man en route to the New World might, within the preceding few months, have been a farmer, a carpenter, and sporadically a vagabond; his answer to the question about his place of origin might have reflected his sense of wherever he had most recently felt settled; and the customs inspector's mood, prejudices, and desire to appear diligent to his superiors likely played various kinds of havoc with the reliability of the information he sent on to London. There are hints that well-to-do passengers were frequently omitted from the surveys, while the ages and numbers of the "servants" (another amorphous category) who were crowded into the ship's hold were often crude estimates. Indeed, the very judgment about who was permanently leaving (as opposed to those who were merely traveling abroad, being too refined to be consigned to such a disreputable category as "emigrant") seems to have been a highly subjective decision on the part of the inspector. Traffic from the long British coastline could never be fully monitored, and inspected ships often picked up more passengers or discharged others before heading out to the open sea.

Still, making a series of educated guesses about how to adjust his data to compensate for such imprecisions, Bailyn derives from the register a set of generalizations upon which to proceed. Comparison with newspaper lists of ship arrivals in the colonies leads him to fix the total number of emigrants in the years covered by the register at about 13,000. Out of what he describes as a "bewildering tangle of routes" and a formerly impenetrable archival jumble of "infinite complexity," he proposes to offer a clarified representation of the emigrants' identity and experience, of which the general features can be summarized: (1) From Scotland and northern England the typical pattern was one of "organized groups traveling aboard vessels that must have been hired and fitted for the purpose." (2) From the southern English ports there occurred a different kind of human outflow—what Bailyn calls a "seepage"—handfuls of emigrants finding passage on any available cargo vessel, often with little apparent premeditation. (3) The Scottish emigration (which Bailyn denotes as the "provincial" pattern) was nearly evenly divided between the sexes, and consisted largely of families with young children and parents in late youth or early middle age. The "metropolitan" migration from the main ports of southern and central England was, by contrast, overwhelmingly male and young. London accommodated a mixture of the two.

THE EXODUS of these years, in short, was a dual, not a single, phenomenon. From southern and central England

> one gains at least a vague impression not of a milling mass of destitute unskilled urban slum dwellers and uprooted peasants, but of certain segments of the lower middle and working classes, artisans and craftsmen with employable skills, for whom emigration would seem to have represented not so much a desperate escape as an opportunity to be reached for.

Although Bailyn notes distinctions between this "metropolitan" phenomenon, whose emigrants traveled sometimes in indentured servitude (which he calls a "benign form of apprenticeship"), and the well-planned "provincial" family migration, he has, in effect, recovered from the 18th century a composite portrait of a recognizable figure: Moynihan's rational, aspiring, dislocated—but not desperate—new American.

This clarification of a mass of raw data is a notable interpretive achievement, which by itself makes Bailyn's book a significant contribution to historical knowledge. A prodigious amount of dedicated research underlies the book, much of it performed by Barbara DeWolfe, whose contribution Bailyn recognizes by placing her name on the title page as virtual co-author, and some of it by a number of Bailyn's graduate students, who have been working under his direction in many of the specific areas that have now been synthesized by their teacher. Yet it is the seemingly logical next step to which Bailyn subjects the mass of organized information—namely, his decision to follow these revealed emigrants across the sea—that raises, I think, certain problems basic to the conceptual coherence of *Voyagers to the West*. Its premise, the ground upon which it builds its claim to significance,

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is that something quasi-physical has been altered in the relation of Old World and New. This change is surely the closest thing to "the creation of [new] forms" with which Bailyn is here concerned. It is not an ideological change, but a kind of suprahuman shift in forces of propulsion and compulsion between the continents, a transformation that, since Bailyn occasionally evokes it through a cosmological metaphor, recalls the old providential idea that human events are teleologically directed by cosmic force. The exertion of influence between two sectors of the globe has been turned around, or at least has reached a turning point that triggers a centuries-long reversal with which we still live.

THIS epochal transformation would be most striking, Bailyn surmises, if we could see it from a celestial perspective: "Imagine a satellite circling the globe from the early medieval period to the advent of industrialism, equipped with a camera of perfect accuracy, a camera capable of scanning vast areas in a single sweep." This is the perspective to which he is repeatedly drawn, and from which he wants to trace the spasmodic but relentless invasion of the New World by populations from the Old. "They came," he writes about a shipload of passengers destined for Nova Scotia in 1772, "from . . . villages set in deep, fertile dales that run like dry river beds between the plateaus and moors: a countryside that looks like the work of some cosmic giant that had torn at the land with its fingertips." The attraction of the cosmic metaphor is its promise to furnish a perspective that will allow us to see the linkages between people who, immersed in their own tiny bits of sublunary experience, must have regarded themselves as accidental shipmates, brought together by nothing more than chance. Bailyn is proposing the production of an ultimate historical map, one that will have a temporal as well as a spatial dimension, and whose key feature is the quickening pace of westward human movement. This is a fine means of identifying the world-historical process that becomes Bailyn's subject, and to which he then gives us a serviceable guide. But he hopes for even more from the satellite camera—that it can "catch not only the outward appearance of the people, their physical movement, and their palpable way of life, but also their interior experiences, the quality of their culture, the capacity of their minds, the patterns of their emotions."

The satellite metaphor, with which Bailyn opens the introductory volume, has become a problem. We have all seen pictures taken from a satellite, but no one has ever read a narrative of human affairs written from such a remove. That is why God, in the Old Testament, condescends to negotiate with his human subjects; it is why, in the Christian myth, the incarnation of God as a human being is the heart of the story. Certain experimental fictions, and some science fictions, have since been attempted from an extraterrestrial perspective, but they are inevitably brief and wholly unable to support a sustained narrative.

TONTONS MACOUTES: THE BOGYMEN

"Watch for auto-*zobops*,"
a voice calls out, and dark glasses make clear
it's a *macoute*, though, too, it's true
long ghost cars with blue beams prowl through
the hills at night, and on the mountaintops
youths disappear

much as a poor victim
of the shakedowns *macoutes* make livings from.
Their grey homburgs and sharp clothes tell
like any white suit or candle
the ties to our all-seeing president
and his dark bent.

In fact, youths will go out
and, at a corner's turn, just drop from sight
or turn up crucified or shot
and dumped like sacks at a church door—
warnings for priest and parishioner
to stay quiet.

North in America
photos of lost children call from cartons,
grocery bags, and a late news.
The fear of local *zobops* grows.
They are without the rich *mangers-loa*
we have for sons.

Knowing Black Africans
thought pictures kidnap souls, we pray to air
the senseless faces come to dwell
like zombies on these cartons,
having escaped by salt the *houngan*'s spell
for voice once more.

Kind Zaka, cousin, rube,
with your blue smock, straw hat, and slung *macoute*,
keep us from wily city folk
who'd steal not soul but pocketbook,
and give us voice to wrangle and give fight
to those who'd rob,

and you, Tonton Noël,
Christmas bring us for our skins new riches.
Don't let evil Tonton Macoute
stuff our bodies in his satchel
or the *macoutes* steal our sweet heads at night.
Sir, stand by us.

JEROME MAZZARO

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The camera must always zoom in.

Bailyn's narrative is no exception. He begins with the distant view—the clarified, computer-generated view—in order to discover the discreet and legible patterns that are, ironically, hidden from closer inspection. But he knows that if one is to grasp something of the felt experience of these human beings, there is no avoiding the need to come back down to within range of their voices. One senses a certain disappointment in Bailyn's acknowledgment that the historian bears this unrelieved obligation to descend from his sighting of visible patterns to the untidy territory of words. When he does so, he encounters the problem that there are simply not enough words. Only a handful among the thousands have left literate traces. We find him dealing with the persistence of the historian's obligation, therefore, by lamenting it as if it has passed: "The questions arise from the computer printouts like a cloud of gnats, and one wishes one were alone, as of old, with a few literary documents that might be analyzed exhaustively, if impressionistically, down to the last syllable." This wistfulness is a little disingenuous, because the whole force of Bailyn's ambition is to get beyond impressionism. What is striking about *Voyagers to the West* is that, in the end, the historian still sits alone with a few "literary documents" and out of them must write the heart, if not the bulk, of his book.

THE FACT IS, moreover, that he chooses one earthbound perspective (the British, whose social equilibrium has been disturbed) to define the importance of his story, while he chooses another (the American) from which to carry it forward. There is nothing wrong with this procedure. It has, to be sure, an implicit justification within the work—namely, that Bailyn wants to see the process of migration to America as part of a continuum rather than as an opposition between Old World history and New. He wants to rejoin the continents by an act of unifying imagination, to write what may be called Atlantic, rather than American, history. In order to do this he takes, as it were, his preliminary aerial scan, by which he is convinced that the peopling of America can only be understood as part of a pattern of motion that was already taking place within Britain. The problem is that in most cases the literary documents continue to tell us more about the British mind in its state of expectancy—sometimes misguided, rarely prescient—than about anything that could be called a process of Americanization as it affected or transformed the emigrants.

Bailyn is brilliantly successful, for instance, at illustrating the decisive difference between those British speculators who persisted in thinking of their American holdings in ways that governed land development in England and those who learned to think in fresh ways about the economic potential of the New World. There was a vast difference, say, between the inaccessible swampland of east Florida, where the amount of initial investment required to settle rent-paying tenants far exceeded any possible quick return, and the wetlands of Lincolnshire or Devon, where profits through a sequence of purchase, development, and rental or resale could be expected. Thus, we are given a chapter entitled "Failure in Xanadu," which recounts the varieties of impasse that a series of British entrepreneurs encountered as they tried to fulfill their dreams of populating the verdant Florida interior. We read of Denys Rolle, a large Devonshire landowner who thought of Florida as a perfect accommodation for land-hungry younger sons of the English gentry, and as a place where the poor urban masses might make lives as servants with independent futures after their terms of indenture had been completed. But as the reality of deprivation set in, Rolle's dreams collapsed. His laborers—whom he had largely recruited from the London slums—fled to St. Augustine, or into the woods to fend for themselves as best they could, or somehow back to England.

MUCH OF *Voyagers to the West* comprises a series of variations on Rolle's story: the story of Old World consciousness driven to the New World by zealous benevolence, by greed, or by an eccentric sense of personal destiny. There is Dr. Andrew Turnbull, a Scot whose fervent interest in Hellenic civilization sent him to the Mediterranean to recruit several hundred Italians, Greeks, Aegean islanders, and Corsicans for his Florida colony of "New Smyrna"—which made fitful progress for a few years until disease, conflict among the diverse settlers, and the sheer resistance of the land turned the colony into a "florid concentration camp." We learn, too, of William Dunbar, another highly educated Scot, who, after spending some time in Philadelphia as a merchant, sailed down the Mississippi to Baton Rouge, secured a grant nearby, and after acquiring slaves in Jamaica, put them to work building for himself a genteel plantation life, maintained by the production and export of barrel staves for the West Indian sugar and tobacco trade. And there is James Hogg, whose remarkable life is skillfully retrieved from the scattered historical record, but whose transit from northern Scotland to North Carolina strikes Bailyn, after he has painstakingly reconstructed it, as "an infinitesimally small speck in the great galactic blur of human movements that spread across the Atlantic world in the years before the Revolution."

There are many more such stories—of the Methodist emigration, for instance, from Yorkshire to Nova Scotia; and the second-stage migration from Connecticut to the Mississippi Valley—that give Bailyn's book a great deal of texture and vividness. But there is always the sense that the elusive multitude finally yields little more than silhouettes to the satellite's camera. Bailyn knows this: "The inner, psychological experience of these inland treks," he writes about the indentured servants hauled by their new masters into the Virginia and Pennsylvania backcountry, "can only be imagined." It is a phrase that often reappears. "What state, psychologically and physically, the emigrants were in," he remarks 200 pages later about a group of battered Scots who have suffered shipwreck en route to North Carolina, "can only be imagined." Yet halfway through *Voyagers to the West* we encounter a series of gouache and ink illustrations by Richard Schlecht of runaway servants, based on descriptive newspaper advertisements offering rewards for their capture and return—a portfolio of drawings that is meant to "get [us] closer to these people," as if to concede that they have so far remained beyond our grasp. Though they add interest to what is already a handsome and much-illustrated book, the drawings are strikingly inadequate as portraits. The artist, like the author, is contending with models who will not come out of the shadows; the majority of the figures are set in profile, giving us some sense of physiognomy, but none of expression. Most of the remaining portraits are deliberately blurred in their representation of faces, concentrating the viewer's attention on posture, clothing, and physical surroundings. Bailyn fiercely wants us to see these people, to

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hear their "boisterous laughs and the grog-shop songs." But their faces remain a blur, their voices a murmur. Only a very few lives—servants' or masters'—can be more fully recovered. Of the Connecticut migration to west Florida, he writes:

> Though led by people of some local prominence in New England, this migration too was a movement of obscure people, anonymous except for occasional entries in official documents—unself-conscious people who left few traces of their personal circumstances, perceptions, or feelings.

William Dunbar survives because he left a diary. The slaves who built his plantation are almost wholly gone.

There is something sobering, therefore, in the collision between Bailyn's skilled ambition and the barriers that stand between him and his proposed recovery of past lives. The most provocative pages of *Voyages to the West* concern a culture left behind rather than a culture in the making. Of course there are exceptions. Bailyn vividly presents Dunbar, for example, as an enlightened Scot transformed into a Faulknerian slave master embodying what would become the enduring contradictions of Southern life: he corresponds with Jefferson on scientific subjects, celebrates the beauty of the land, and all the while brutally enforces discipline among his slaves, marveling at their disloyalty. Other recent historians of colonial America, such as William Cronon and Rhys Isaac, have attempted to grasp the elusive (because unwritten) experience of early Americans by "reading" a different sort of historical record—the physical changes inflicted upon the land, or the material structures erected on it. But Bailyn remains a literary historian in the sense that his basic impulse, and his great gift, is to turn inchoate data into narrative. *Voyagers to the West* is finally a compendium of stories—sometimes farcical, sometimes poignant, variously interlinked, and no doubt somehow representative. Bailyn puts it well: "These separate narratives form trace lines—a rubbing, as it were, over the incised reality of that distant world . . . ."

WHAT IS perhaps most noteworthy about this work is the mixed grandeur and modesty of its intention. It is, in one sense, the beginning of what may become the most ambitious enterprise by an American historian since Richard Hofstadter's projected and sadly uncompleted series of volumes on American culture from the mid-18th to the 20th century. It is conceived on an epic scale and executed with heroic determination, though Bailyn regards it as only a first effort to "catch on the wing . . . one phase of the overall peopling process, . . . a base line for the story as a whole." There is much more to come.

One awaits the future volumes with great anticipation. Yet it is by no means clear from this initial installment what to expect. For *Voyagers* is also a modest work in that it relinquishes all ambition to define the emergence of "Americanness" in any sweeping sense; it refuses to enter into combat upon what Bailyn calls the "battleground for general notions of the 'meaning' of American life." As practitioners of "American studies" seem more and more enchanted by the notion that a unitary mental structure called "the American ideology" can be identified and traced to its genesis, this distinguished historian seems to be turning away from the chimerical ambition of formulating a unified theory of American culture, or even of glimpsing the beginnings of something that could be called the American "character." He has turned instead to the hard work of revealing the diversity and fragmentary nature of American experience in a period about which little but scattered impressions has been available before. He has produced a work of literary distinction in its own right, and one that is strikingly consistent in spirit with the contemporary trend—in fiction as well as in historiography—toward a return to narrative. Yet even as certain American novelists and historians are attempting to restore the force of narrative to their respective genres, they are also acknowledging the fact of regional discordances in our culture, and are thereby eschewing the idea of America as an expressible whole. Bailyn, in this sense, is among them.

There are, to be sure, certain hints of transcendent themes in Bailyn's new work: the great motive of land speculation, for example, as the driving force of American history. He takes issue with what he deems to be Frederick Jackson Turner's romanticization of the frontier, but he runs close to Turner's notion that the land itself (as an available and tradable commodity) is the single most powerful explanatory feature of American history. There is a hint, too, that one trace of unity among the diverse immigrant experiences that the colonial

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records reveal is the presence, or at least the perception, of a lately risen tyranny as the propelling factor: the specter of a rent-mongering landlord, or a heartless employer, whose indifference to the traditional rights and expectations of his dependents spurs them to leave the neighborhood of their distress. "To live independant" is the explanation Bailyn quotes from one Yorkshire emigrant who drove far beyond Halifax into the wilderness of Nova Scotia, and the closing pages of the book follow a handful of emigrants into the Revolution itself—some as loyalists, some as rebels.

Bailyn himself, it should be said, poses a renewed version toward the end of *Voyagers to the West* of the sort of historical question that he had made central to his work 20 years ago:

> Was it true, as Dr. Johnson said, that there was some catastrophic cultural loss in their emigration, in that their power had consisted in their concentration in the lands of their birth, and that, dispersed 'in the boundless regions of America, . . . they have no effect'? What 'effect' was lost in their dispersal? Was there no *re*construction of cultural power in the new environment?

This is a tantalizing question; given the arrival of these immigrants in the years just before the Revolution, and given their persistence (and that of their children) into the years of the formation of the republic, it may reappear as the initiating question of Bailyn's coming volumes. If this turns out to be so, then he will have fully returned to his former project of tracing "the dawning of ideas and the creation of forms" in the realm of mind. Whether such an enterprise is any longer possible, or whether the maturity of this historian and the recalcitrance of history itself will make it impossible, remains to be seen.

ANDREW DELBANCO

Andrew Delbanco, associate professor of English at Columbia University, is completing a book entitled *The Puritan Ordeal: Becoming American in the Seventeenth Century*, to be published by Harvard University Press.

CHRONICLE OF A SUICIDE

Selected Letters of Charles Baudelaire: The Conquest of Solitude translated and edited by Rosemary Lloyd

(University of Chicago Press, 268 pp., $24.95)

Here we have a correspondence that painfully confirms Dr. Johnson's dictum: "All the importunities and perplexities of business are softness and luxury compared with the incessant cravings of vacancy and the unsatisfactory expedients of idleness." Revolted by existence and, in his revulsion, denouncing the *horrible quotidien*, Charles Baudelaire could no more bring himself to linger informatively over the anecdotal stuff of life than he could embark upon the autobiographical narrative that he hoped would some day earn him a place beside Rousseau, Chateaubriand, and Byron. What his letters reveal is not the poet observing his age or his own mind, but the tenacity of dreams and grievances that held him hostage to childhood. In this sense it may be said of the letters, and particularly of those he wrote to his mother, that they constitute the chronicle of a suicide.

Baudelaire's mother, Caroline Dufays, was born in 1793 in London, where her father, an army officer loyal to the king, had sought political asylum. Orphaned at an early age, she grew up as the ward of a rich lawyer who vouchsafed her all the advantages his own children enjoyed until it came time for her to marry. Genteel but dowerless, Caroline attracted little attention and stood on the threshold of old maidenhood when a widower named François Baudelaire claimed her hand. Thirty-three years older than she, this sexagenarian hailed from another century. During the ancien régime he had taken holy orders and, being a cultivated man, found employment tutoring the son of Choiseul Praslin, whose ducal mansion was a gathering place for philosophes such as Condorcet and Helvétius. The world that permitted clerics and non-believers to fraternize under aristocratic roofs ended with the Revolution, which saw François Baudelaire unfrock himself. How he survived is not known, but he did survive; and in 1797 the ex-priest married a woman of means, by whom he was soon to sire his first son, Alphonse. Napoleon's ascension brought Baudelaire great good fortune as Choiseul Praslin *fils*, with friends in high places, arranged a sinecure that entitled his mentor to a house near the Senate, a carriage and pair, and a footman. Flanked by retainers, he strode importantly through middle age. Fourteen years passed before trouble caught him up again. In 1814 his wife died and soon thereafter the restored Bourbons sent him packing, though not without a substantial pension.

François Baudelaire had just enough ambition left to plant one more seed. Charles was six when, in 1827, the decorous, white-haired gentleman who walked him around the Luxembourg Gardens while leaning on a cane finally expired. Two years later the widow Baudelaire became Madame Aupick. This time she married someone with whom she had fallen head over heels in love. Major Jacques Aupick, despite his faintly comical name, trailed streamers of glory for having fought under Napoleon in Austria, in Saxony, in Spain, at Waterloo. He cut a handsome figure, and everything about him bespoke the stalwart professional whose career would transcend France's political vicissitudes. Promoted to colonel after a workers' insurrection in Lyon, which he helped crush, Aupick eventually became commander of the Paris fort. Generalship led to ambassadorial portfolios. With Caroline at his side, he represented the Constitutional Monarchy in Turkey and the Republic in Spain before answering Napoleon III's call to sit pretty as an appointed member of the Imperial Senate.

There can be no doubt that her second marriage rejuvenated Caroline, but for Charles it spelled disaster. The cynosure of his mother's eye since infancy, he found himself eclipsed overnight by a rival who made him feel insignificant. This fall from grace became official when Aupick prevailed upon the headmaster of Lycée Louis-le-Grand to enroll his stepson as a boarder. Napoleonic discipline did not accomplish what the well-intentioned general thought it might. "Gifted with outstanding ability, but has

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spoiled everything by his mulishness" is how one report characterized Charles, in whose troubled soul a desperate need to win approval struggled continually against the impulse to flout authority. Rebellious yet guilt-ridden, he could neither stifle his rage nor desist from punishing himself, and so he established a pattern of delinquencies and expiations that continued throughout adulthood. Prizes there were, but garnering them brought no real joy, for mother's love was the great prize and mother had awarded it to someone else. "You'll tell me: read a book," he complained at 17, during a lonely summer spent at school:

> I'm absolutely fed up with literature: I can truly say that ever since I've been able to read I've not yet found a book that entirely pleased me, that I could like from first page to last page; so I don't read anymore. I'm stuffed with literature. I don't talk to anyone, I think of you; you at least are a perpetual book, one can chat with you, one can busy oneself loving you: that doesn't pall as other pleasures do.

As graduation drew near, the notion that he was a born outcast, a sport of nature, a weakling inherently unfit for the hurly-burly, took root in his mind. While teachers judged him "frivolous" and "insolent," Caroline, from whom he hid nothing, knew him to be overwhelmed by terror. "I feel my life outside school fast approaching, and that causes me even more fear," he confessed. "All the acquaintances one must make, all the effort required to find an empty place in the crowd, all that frightens me."

AN EMPTY place in the Foreign Office could have been found had he let Aupick befriend him, but Baudelaire lost no time carving out his province at the bohemian fringe, where Aupick's world was deemed contemptible. Sartorial eccentricity, gutter language, opium, hashish, intercourse with prostitutes—all served to thwart bourgeois expectations and make him an object of scandalized concern. "The utter contempt he voices for humanity and the total lack of belief in virtue, or in anything, disturbs me very much," wrote Caroline. "Hitherto I have consoled myself with the illusion that, despite his wild and extravagant ideas, I need fear no real harm. I thought that . . . he was pious and possessed a basis of firm beliefs." Accumulating debt as if innocent of money, he implored those whom he hoped his dissolute life would bring low to rescue him from irate creditors. This, too, became habitual.

It was decided that he should try to learn new ways abroad, in India, where the profligate and the bankrupt of 19th-century France often went for rehabilitation. No sooner had his ship anchored at Mauritius than homesickness declared itself, and the captain reluctantly agreed to send him back. "If I wrote down everything I've thought and imagined while far from you, I'd run out of paper. . . . I think I've returned with a fund of good sense," he assured Aupick. But his pledge fell on dubious ears, and Aupick was not alone in doubting whether good sense would prevail against flawed nature once Charles acquired his patrimony. Sure enough, the spendthrift took up where he had left off, which is to say that he frequented opium dens, purchased rare objects for his flat in the Hotel Lauzun, and called attention to himself with such extravagance of dress that literary Paris knew him as a dandy before it recognized him as a poet.

It also knew him as a virtuoso talker. "In the course of that night, which remains the best memory of my youth, Baudelaire lavished on me alone the treasure and incalculable richness of his mind," recalled Théodore de Banville, "and he was like the princess in the fairy tale who, from her half-open lips, pours out a flood of diamonds and precious stones." Life was a nightly performance in which Charles came on stage to invent Baudelaire. What this character might say no one could predict, not even Charles, who, being part old-fashioned gentleman and part enfant terrible, combined exquisite manners with a flair for provocation that displayed itself at its most sadistic in the company of women. "During childhood, I wanted to be either a pope, but a militant pope, or an actor. How these fantasies delighted me," he noted years later, when contemplating an autobiography, one chapter of which would have been all about "the actor's vocation, the actor's glory, the actor's art."

By 1844 Baudelaire had squandered half his considerable inheritance. Caroline took steps to put what remained of it in the hands of a *conseil judiciaire*, or guardian, named Ancelle. The humiliation this caused was profound:

> Now, although I'm your son, you ought to hold me in enough respect not to abandon me to the judgment of strangers when you know how deeply that wounds me. . . . It's absolutely certain . . . the result will be exactly the opposite of what you predict—to be quite precise, it'll lead to a complete collapse.

Harnassed by Caroline to yet another surrogate father, he interpreted the guardianship as proof of her disdain for his manhood rather than as a measure of her concern for his future independence. She was the castrating mother, and Baudelaire, who could not allow that he had brought Ancelle upon himself, obsessively drummed this home. "That cursed guardianship has always made me timid

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and clumsy," he lamented at 40. "I felt as if I had a shameful sore that everyone could see. Just think what I've endured for seventeen years." Soon after his sentence took effect, he attempted or feigned suicide (there is some question which). Then, like Oscar Wilde resolving in Wandsworth prison "to live, but to wear gloom as a king wears purple," he cast off the gorgeous apparel of youth, together with his wavy locks, and ordered the black broadcloth suit that became his uniform. Never again would Caroline behold him without seeing him draped in penitential accusation.

BLACK MAY also have been meant to evoke the widow's weeds his mother wore during her brief period of bereavement, when no one stood between them; for even as he spoke about suicide, he hitched her maiden name to his patronymic and styled himself Baudelaire du Faÿs. "If you oblige me by mentioning [my account of the 1846 Salon] in your papers . . . make sure that you spell my name right: du Faÿs, in two words, with a *y*, a diarasis, and an *s*," he urged one Julien Lemer. "I find it intolerable to be mistaken for that joker who dares go by the name Dufaï, spelled, luckily, with an *i* and without an *s* at the end." The idea that fame, if only he could achieve it, would restore their original union pervades his correspondence with his mother, as does the belief that evil men, his own infirmity, or Caroline herself would somehow arrange to frustrate him. With regular reports on work in progress, he kept impersonating the prolific author whom he imagined she could love. "I have in my head twenty novels and two plays. I don't want an honest, commonplace reputation. I want to crush people, astonish them, like Byron, Balzac, or Chateaubriand. Is there still time?" Of many such works nothing more was heard: they constitute a phantom bibliography. Nor did Caroline ever see him fulfill his repeated promise to "begin a new life," to "start afresh." Incapable either of abolishing himself or making himself over, he lived as if spellbound by these kindred alternatives. Years passed and Baudelaire remained, in his own mind, a character still unborn or better dead.

He did not want for admirers among literati who detected in poems like "Les Deux Crépuscules" what Victor Hugo called "a new shiver." During the decade that followed the 1848 revolution his name became linked with that of Edgar Allan Poe, whom he translated. When Paris finally gave him center stage, however, he had to play the scapegoat rather than the lion. In August 1857, not long after Flaubert stood trial on a charge of having offended public morality, Baudelaire found himself arraigned on the same charge and prosecuted by the same state advocate, Ernest Pinard. His partisans were outspoken, but those who might have swayed judicial opinion, notably Sainte-Beuve, said nothing, for fear of inviting reprisals from *fonctionnaires* determined to punish in *Les Fleurs du mal* that which had gone unpunished in *Madame Bovary*. Pinard offered several poems as evidence of the rot civilized society could not afford and, step by step, worked his way toward a peroration that carefully denied Baudelaire grounds for martyrdom. "Be merciful to Baudelaire the human being, who is a man of restless, unbalanced temperament, but ban certain poems and thus give other people a necessary warning" was how he put it to the jury, which heeded him in every particular. Acquitted of blasphemy, Baudelaire lost face.

GENERAL AUPICK having died four months before this ordeal, Caroline bore the full brunt of Charles's wrath. At first, he felt quite certain that notoriety was all to the good. It was, indeed, a consummation more profitable than mere fame, or so he reckoned in July, when critics were busy fulminating against him. "Don't get uselessly worried in your usual fashion. My back is solid enough," he assured Caroline, who had retired to Honfleur in Normandy. "And please don't consider this scandal, which is causing a great hub-bub here, as anything but the foundation of my fortune." By December his optimism had waned and Charles waxed resentful again. "The parcel I've been keeping for you contains, first, some articles of mine published during the second half of the year (I was again summoned to appear before the public prosecutor for the review of *Madame Bovary*, a book that was taken to court but acquitted)," he began.

> Then there is a *sample* of the reviews of *The Flowers of Evil*; this *sample* (for there were so many that finally, equally tired of flattery and of stupid attacks, I didn't even deign to read them) will let you judge the sinister luster shed by this book in which I sought to express some of my sources of anger and melancholy;—finally, the *book itself*, which you so strangely rejected when you thought it right to join your censure to the outrages that were piled on me from all sides.

Still failing tests on which the approval of Caroline hinged, he bound himself inseparably to her in a drama of rejection and betrayal that no longer needed live third parties. It needed only Charles Baudelaire, who admitted as much when he wrote: "I am the wound and the knife! I am the slap and the cheek! I am the limbs and the wheel, and the victim and the executioner." But his *folie à deux* with mother brought some relief from abysmal loneliness; the poem that contains these lines contains others addressed to a partner or alter-ego in whom Caroline, if she read *L'Heautontimoroumenos*, must have recognized herself: "I shall make the waters of suffering spring from your lid, to slake my Sahara." Love without pain lacked its sacramental ingredient.

THAT SOMEONE who stood trial in 1857 should have campaigned for election to the French Academy four years later, when Father Lacordaire's seat became available, indicates better than any previous maneuver how desperately Baudelaire rode for falls. It was a kind of Pascalian wager made in the belief that winning it would afford him not only material comfort but, above all, mother's grace. "I told myself that you attach great importance to public honors and that if by a miracle . . . I were to succeed, it would give you immense joy," he explained in December 1861. "It's true that I also said to myself: 'If for a wonder I did succeed, my mother would perhaps comprehend at last that I can't bear to remain in a dishonorable position. Perhaps then we'd find a solution.' " Down-at-heel, he tramped from interview to interview like a beggar, craving the indulgence of academicians who felt rather put upon, until Sainte-Beuve made him understand that his cause was futile.

Further attempts to redeem himself were cut short by syphilis, which he had contracted young. Baudelaire seldom spoke about the disease (and even then obliquely, in metaphors that bore upon his moral condition: "I felt as if I had a shameful sore that everyone could see"; "I thought of cauterizing my laziness"; and so on). Still, throughout the 1850s it ran its grim course, producing ulcers and draining him of energy. By 1860 it had begun to affect the brain. "The day before yesterday," he told his mother in a letter not translated by Rosemary Lloyd,

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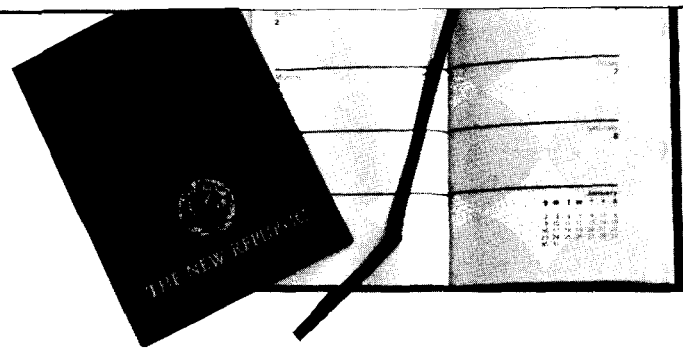
> I experienced a most peculiar seizure. I was away from home, and hadn't eaten for some time. I believe it was something in the nature of a cerebral congestion. A nice old lady revived me with some strange methods. As soon as I recovered my wits, another seizure occurred. Terribly weak and giddy and nauseated, I could hardly go upstairs without feeling as if I was going to faint.

This was the first knell. He resumed his hand-to-mouth existence and was improvising a livelihood in Brussels when other strokes followed in swift succession. The decrepit 45-year-old who made it home on July 2, 1866, walked with a cane and couldn't speak, except to utter the oath *sacré nom*. Caroline put him in a Paris nursing home, where he lingered month after month. As her presence visibly upset him, doctors advised her to stay put in Honfleur. She stayed there until a week before the end. Baudelaire, who had meanwhile lost his mind entirely, died in her arms on the last day of August 1867.

Lloyd has written a fine introductory essay, but her best work stops there. A representative choice of letters strung together with very little editorial elucidation won't do for the general reader to whom it is addressed, and Baudelaire's letters, unlike Byron's or Flaubert's, cannot stand alone on their literary merits. After the writer's narration of a long, complicated dream, for instance, would it not have been considerate to summarize Michel Butor's interpretation of it, instead of merely providing the bibliographical reference? Forgotten people go unidentified, obscure events of momentary importance to Baudelaire go unexplained, and, since answers from correspondents are never quoted, the reader is always left wondering how one matter or another resolved itself. Between such reticence and full-blown scholarly commentary lies the kind of annotation that would best serve the public for which this volume is intended. Even so, those who know Baudelaire's work, but nothing of the life from which it sprang, will understand better, with this book in hand, what Baudelaire meant by "my sources of anger and melancholy."

FREDERICK BROWN

Frederick Brown is professor of French at the State University of New York at Stony Brook and the author most recently of *Theater and Revolution* (Viking).



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LOAN RANGERS

Bailout: An Insider's Account of Bank Failures and Rescues by Irvine H. Sprague

(Basic Books, 299 pp., $17.95)

In Whose Interest? International Banking and American Foreign Policy by Benjamin J. Cohen

(Yale University Press, 347 pp., $19.95)

Recently my wife and I tried to get a bank loan. The sum we sought was somewhat large compared to the salaries we earn, but still safely within five figures. We are a good credit risk; we have always paid our bills on time; we live modestly. I shared intimate details of our family finances with the bank. The lending officer had me fill out a long questionnaire. I had to supply him with three character references and find creditors who could vouch for my solvency and reliability. I even located a former landlord, who dimly remembered that I had once paid him rent on time. My file was then shifted to the manager of the bank's disbursement services division, who subjected me to more detailed questioning and carefully scrutinized the project I was intending to invest in. There followed another round of forms. An assistant treasurer of the bank's documentary control unit had a problem with one of the documents I supplied, which my lawyer solved. Another account officer wanted one of the forms notarized. A deputy credit supervising officer wanted more documentation. Then, after a month of waiting, I called the vice president for credit, who said that they were still reviewing my loan application but that no decision had been reached. He suggested I come in and fill out some more forms. Finally, after another month's wait, we got the loan.

I am a small customer. During the past decade or so, American banks have also lent several hundred billion dollars to the likes of Poland, Mexico, Brazil, Texas real estate developers, Oklahoma energy moguls, and assorted takeover entrepreneurs. Many of these loans, however, have never been repaid. Probably they never will be. Unlike the picayune and prolonged review of my little loan application, decisions to lend vast sums to such risky borrowers were made quickly, without extensive information or deliberation. There is, to put it mildly, a discrepancy here.

Two excellent books shed some light on the strange ways in which banks behave. Irvine Sprague was formerly chairman and board member of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, authorized by Congress to rescue banks deemed "essential" to the economy. His book examines in fascinating detail the largest bank bailouts of the early 1980s, including the First Pennsylvania Bank of Philadelphia and Continental Illinois. Sprague's account provides a valuable behind-the-scenes look at how government officials view their role in maintaining the nation's banking system. Benjamin Cohen is a professor of international economic affairs at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. His book systematically recounts several of the largest international bank problems of the last decade, including the mammoth task of recycling Arab oil money, the Polish debt crisis, and the Latin American debt crisis. Cohen's account is scholarly, balanced, and insightful.

What emerges from these two perspectives is a picture of an American banking system fundamentally oblivious to large risk. Both authors suggest that the fault lies in the bureaucratic and political incentives that influence bank officials. But curiously, neither author comes up with recommendations that address these core problems.

The first problem is the bureaucratic tendency to ignore the risk of calamities of unknown probability. Small risks (that someone like myself might default on a relatively small loan) are well understood; they happen often enough that their probabilities can be measured, and standard precautions can be taken in advance. More to the point, loan officers know that their superiors also know these probabilities, so that any deviation from prudent lending practice is readily apparent. But a bank has little or no institutional memory of major defaults on a grand scale. These sorts of probabilities cannot be reduced to standard operating practice. The longer the interval since the last such disaster, the more likely it is that people will behave as if it could never happen again. Under these circumstances, loan officers know only one thing: if they don't approve the giant loan, some other bank will. Prudence will be rewarded by conspicuous loss of business.

The second problem is that loan officers are evaluated over relatively short time periods. Their performances are rated against quarterly earnings targets and loan quotas. Small run-of-the-mill borrowers who may default quickly thus present few attractions. The large bonuses come with the largest of borrowers whose huge defaults are likely to be years away, long after the loan officer has moved on to another job. Cohen quotes one bank officer who had engineered several Latin American loans: "It was always tempting to sign up a loan. . . . By the time the problems began, you'd moved on somewhere else and the chairman had retired."

Third, there is the herding instinct that obtains whenever large sums of money are involved. As groups of banks advanced credit to Poland or Mexico, to the purchasers of oil-drilling equipment or commercial real estate, or to the promoters of leveraged buyouts and other schemes, loan officers found safety in numbers. Sprague's accounts of the mounting troubles of the Bank of the Commonwealth, First Pennsylvania, and Continental Illinois confirm this pattern. Regardless of how risky the loans, the fact that other major banks committed their funds to the same class of borrowers lent credibility to the effort. Bank officials could claim that their decisions reflected the best wisdom at the time. Others, after all, had made the same mistake.

Then there is the omnipresent assumption that large borrowers cannot default. They are thought to be too big and too established to do what small borrowers do all the time. Cohen quotes Walter Wriston, former chairman of Citibank, who confidently lent billions to Latin American nations during the 1970s because "countries do not fail to exist." Yet ironically it is precisely

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because of their sovereign status that governments cannot always be relied upon to exercise self-restraint in their borrowing.

But perhaps the most important factor explaining American banks' willingness to bear enormous risk is their confidence that the government will help them out in a pinch. This is particularly true of America's largest banks, which have taken on proportionately the largest risks. After 11 years of bailing out big banks, Sprague concludes that "at some point a bank is absolutely safe—too big to let fail." Its fate is too intertwined with the fates of numerous other, smaller lending institutions; its depositors' confidence is too important to the public's confidence in the entire banking system. Sprague and his colleagues decided to rescue the First Pennsylvania Bank of Philadelphia in 1980 because they feared that its collapse would also bring down hundreds of smaller banks that had its uninsured funds on deposit. Four years later they decided that the pending collapse of Continental Illinois might lead to a national banking panic, since only ten percent of its $39 billion in deposits was insured.

We learn that having such a small percentage of insured deposits is not unusual for major American banks, since they pay no insurance premiums on deposits they accept from abroad—deposits that compose a significant portion of their overall liabilities. In effect, Sprague tells us, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation is prepared to rescue "any failing multinational institution that cannot be sold . . . to either a foreign or domestic suitor." With such a generous rule of thumb, it is small wonder that large American banks have been emboldened to risk their shareholders' money on questionable ventures. The risk is far less than it would otherwise seem.

COHEN'S careful study of American banks' international lending practices drives home the point. Cohen is interested primarily in the strategic relationships between the banks and the government—between banking and diplomacy, high finance and high politics. He finds each side quietly dependent on the other. Thus, according to Cohen, international banking is never simply a commercial activity. American foreign policy is implicated whenever American banks do a sizable amount of business with other sovereign governments.

A telling example is the Polish debt crisis. During the era of détente, American banks were willing to lend large sums to the Soviet Union and its Eastern European allies, whose hard-currency indebtedness climbed from $7 billion in 1970 to nearly $66 billion by the end of the decade—significantly faster than these economies were growing. By 1980 Poland, in particular, was on the brink of defaulting on $26 billion of outstanding debt. With Poland's suppression of the Solidarity movement in 1981, the Reagan administration was placed in a difficult bind. Efforts to pressure the Polish authorities into reversing their harsh policies were compromised by worries over the Poles' indebtedness to American banks. In the end, the banks won. The administration chose to rescue Poland and the banks—to the tune of $344 million in 1982 alone—rather than countenance a formal default.

Bank rescues have also been motivated by America's security interests in debtor countries. Cohen explains, for example, how Turkey's brush with financial collapse in 1979 summoned pledges of nearly $1 billion from the United States and other Western allies mindful of Turkey's strategic importance to NATO. Turkey was not the only beneficiary of this rescue, of course; the American banks, to which Turkey owed large sums, simultaneously profited.

THE STORY HAS been similar in Latin America. American banks, awash with Arab oil money throughout most of the 1970s, needed customers; oil-importing nations, particularly in Latin America, needed loans. Just as détente had signaled to the banks that large sums could be lent with impunity to the Soviet bloc, so too did the U.S. government's tacit acknowledgment of the importance of recycling petrodollars signal to them that there was relatively little risk involved in lending even larger sums to Latin American countries. By 1982 Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico together owed America's nine largest banks more than 140 percent of the banks' total capital. The process of rescheduling the debts and interest arrears gradually came to resemble default in all but name: it was default by attrition. By 1984 some $35 billion was flowing from the Latin American debtors to American banks—a sum equal to ten percent of these nations' aggregate export revenues and more than twice their hard-won trade surpluses.

At first the Reagan administration left it to the International Monetary Fund and the banks to work out austerity plans for the debtor nations. ("Austerity" was a nice way of saying lower living standards.) The plans were intended to clamp down on these countries' consumption and investment, to free resources for debt service. But the timing was unfortunate. Much of Latin America was just beginning to experiment with democracy. Beginning in 1980, generals had allowed power to pass to elected civilian presidents in several debtor nations. These newborn democracies were delicate things. Anti-democratic forces were waiting in the wings (the military in the right wing, the communists in the left) to pick up the pieces should democracy fail. High unemployment and collapsing living standards were not the most favorable accompaniments to democratic experimentation.

Latin American indebtedness has posed problems for the United States in other ways. As these southern economies faltered, a flood of illicit and dangerous drugs was released into the United States. By 1985, the sale of cocaine represented some ten percent of Bolivia's GNP, and twice its legal export earnings. When ambitious Latin Americans were not turning to drug production, they were trying to find work in the United States. Illegal aliens constituted another flood, whose intensity has been directly proportional to economic hardship at home.

IN THE FALL of 1983, the United States contributed to a substantial increase in IMF funding in order to ease the debt crisis. In October 1985, Treasury Secretary James Baker formally proposed a program for sustained growth through which the World Bank (funded largely by the United States), regional development banks (also with American funds), and American banks would come up with some $29 billion over three years to help 15 hard-pressed debtor nations. By the end of September, Mexico and its creditor banks announced that they had reached agreement on a $6 billion loan package, of which $500 million was cofinanced by the World Bank. In the meantime, several Democrats, notably Senator Bill Bradley, have urged an even more ambitious rescue package, with substantially higher levels of government funding. There seems little doubt that a major rescue is on its way.

As Cohen points out, the Latin American debt crisis is not an entirely new phenomenon. American bankers that claim

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they couldn't have foreseen the problems when they made the loans had only to examine history. Cohen relates in fascinating detail a recurring pattern of international loans turning sour, followed by more loans intended to prop up the faltering debtor nation, and culminating in elaborate government rescues. In the late 1880s London's Baring Brothers Bank extended substantial loans to Argentina. When Argentina's pending default threatened to bring down the bank and undermine confidence in the entire British banking system, a rescue was organized by the Bank of England and the British Treasury, including a special commission to oversee a restructuring of the Argentine debt.

Government involvement was not always so mild. When Venezuela repudiated its debts in 1902, the Royal Navy blockaded Venezuela's harbors (giving rise to the term "gunboat diplomacy"). Concerned about the increased meddling of European powers in the hemisphere, Theodore Roosevelt pledged that the United States would henceforth assume responsibility for ensuring that the Latin American states fulfilled their financial obligations—thus committing the United States to subsequent interventions in the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Honduras, and Nicaragua, among others. The American government became a collection agency for the world's major banks. In the 1930s, Britain's Royal Institute of International Affairs noted that "the history of investment in South America throughout the last century has been one of confidence followed by disillusionment, of borrowing cycles followed by widespread defaults."

WHAT SHOULD be done to avoid more of the same in the future? The policies proposed by both Sprague and Cohen seem strangely incomplete. Sprague calls for more bank examinations, computerized checks on rapidly growing institutions, and a more encompassing structure of insurance premiums on deposits. Cohen wants better communication between bankers and diplomats, more cooperation, and more coordination to ensure that both sides' goals can be achieved more efficiently. These suggestions are unobjectionable. They may even help. But they seem to miss the heart of the matter. If our biggest banks are prone to make large and dubious loans because of certain bureaucratic and political incentives built into the practice of large-scale banking, then no number of bank examinations or meetings between bank officers and government officials is likely to make much of a difference.

Most bank rescues are invisible. Decisions are highly technical, rendered by bureaucrats in the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation or the IMF and the World Bank. The avowed purpose is never to rescue a bank, but to ensure the credibility of the banking system, protect unwary depositors, guard America's security interests, or stabilize debtor nations and improve the world economy. We seem to take for granted that achievement of these proximate goals necessarily entails saving a big bank—and the bank's shareholders—along the way. But so long as this assumption remains unquestioned, the internal incentives operating upon bank officers will continue to lead them toward making big, risky loans. Why not, when the government will pick up the pieces?

A more lasting solution would seek to detach these other goals from saving the banks' shareholders. Consider that, according to recent reports, our nation's largest banks are now prosperous again. Their net incomes jumped nearly 50 percent last year. Their profits are up 18 percent, the biggest increase in a decade. Bank shareholders are sitting pretty. But many of our largest banks are still carrying mammoth loans on their balance sheets at face value, even though a significant portion of these loans are effectively in default. No one is prepared to blow the whistle and force the banks to write down the loans. Why not? Because this would impose enormous losses on the banks. Many would not have sufficient capital to meet the minimums required by law. It seems far safer to wait it out, to accept the charade of rescheduling the loans, all the while hoping that a government rescue will eventually put matters right.

But how disastrous would it really be to require that all loans be carried on the banks' books at market value? At worst, the banks would have to cut their dividends to build their capital back up to where it should be. Share prices would drop as a result. Perhaps shareholders would demand more prudence in the future; they might even vote out the old management, or tender their shares to somebody capable of doing a better job.

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Operating incentives would shift toward more care in lending large sums of money. The added advantage is that this would encourage banks to sell the loans on the open market at a price reflecting their true, lower values. (That is something the banks dare not do now, for fear that the loans would then have to be entered on their books at the lower sale price.) This in turn would create a secondary market in such loans, allowing purchasers of the loans to swap them for equity in troubled debtor companies or in healthy companies within troubled debtor nations. Thus the debts would be rescheduled in a way that would give debtors the freedom and incentive to restructure themselves. At the same time, bank shareholders would be deprived of their windfall.

American capitalism is premised on the comforting notion that public and private sectors are, and forever will remain, safely distinct. This prevailing view leads us to all sorts of policy prescriptions for tidying up the less desirable side effects of business activity. Occasionally, however, the veil is lifted and we are allowed to gaze in wonderment at a private sector whose largest institutions are guaranteed peace, safety, and profits by a public sector ever anxious to please them. Here we have two masterly accounts that lift the veil with a vengeance. Unfortunately, their policy prescriptions suggest tidying the mess rather than rooting out the rot.

ROBERT B. REICH

THE OFFICIAL STORY

Nunca Más: The Report of the Argentine National Commission on the Disappeared

(Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 463 pp., $22.50)

On March 24, 1976, the generals on their white horses seized power in Argentina. They were coming, they explained, to save the country from chaos. Many Argentinians applauded, for the country was indeed falling apart. An inept, corrupt president (Perón's widow, Isabel); a paralyzed government; economic recession; rampant inflation; the strongest urban guerrilla movement in Latin America (the Montoneros)—these were some of the elements of the disarray.

Six years and nine months later, the generals returned the presidential palace to Raúl Alfonsín, a civilian, and withdrew to the barracks. They had long since lost their white horses. When they seized power, the country's foreign debt was $8 billion. When they left, Argentina owed $43 billion. Inflation and recession had worsened under their rule. In 1982 the generals had fought their first foreign war in a century, and lost pitifully. Their only success was that they had crushed the guerrillas; and in the process they had killed over 20,000 of their countrymen.

Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, El Salvador, Guatemala: a chain of corpses links the proud countries of the Southern Cone to the banana republics of Isthmian America. In each, in recent years, the armed forces have murdered thousands in the name of social peace. In each, they have tortured on a massive scale. In each, they have proved inept and corrupt in their management of the economy.

For the number of dead, it is not Argentina but Guatemala that holds the macabre record: close to 100,000 unarmed civilians were slaughtered by the military between 1979 and 1983, in a country of eight million. Still, Argentina had a distinction. Never in the history of Latin America has a ruling regime relied upon so refined a system of oppression. The victims were first abducted; then they were tortured; and then most of them were killed. They were the "disappeared," the nameless ones. There was one Argentina with tribunals, jails, churches, schools, newspapers, movie theaters, and broad avenues, an Argentina that seemed to lead a normal life and boasted of its membership in Christian and Western civilization. And then there was, in the words of a journalist who fled the country because of his support for human dignity, another Argentina:

> . . . the real Argentina, the secret country that people knew about but dared not describe. In this Argentina radios were turned up so loud that the sound was distorted; but screams rose clearly above the background music, like the notes of a violin soaring above the orchestra.

This is the country that *Nunca Más* sets out to describe.

In 1984 President Alfonsín appointed an independent commission with a single mandate: to investigate the fate of the disappeared. For months on end, the commissioners listened to thousands of victims: a few hundred survivors and thousands of relatives of those who never returned. They also gathered "the testimony of people who were involved in the repression but who, for whatever obscure motives, approached us to tell us what they knew." They visited those clandestine prisons that had not been destroyed by the military. Their final report (50,000 pages long) was accompanied by a summary that appeared as a book in Spanish and has now been published in English: *Nunca Más*, Never Again.

Fundamental human rights, notes *Nunca Más*, include the right to life; the right to the respect of one's person; the right to a trial; the right not to suffer either inhuman conditions of detention, denial of justice, or summary execution:

> From the huge documentation we have gathered, it can be seen that these human rights were violated at all levels by the Argentine state during the repression carried out by the Armed Forces. Nor were they violated in haphazard fashion, but systematically, according to a similar pattern, with identical kidnappings and tortures taking place throughout the country. How can this be viewed as anything but a planned campaign of terror conceived by the military high command? . . . How can one speak of *individual excesses*?

Unlike its counterparts in Chile and Uruguay, the Argentine military had a long tradition of anti-democratic intervention in civilian politics. Their rule was often cruel. Yet it was never as savage as the tyranny imposed in 1976. It is also true that never before had they faced a strong guerrilla movement that seemed to enjoy widespread sympathy among youth and organized labor. This new threat, in addition to the crass incompetence of the government of Isabel Perón, explains why the upper class, as well as many in the middle class, the Church, the press, and other key institutions, supported the military coup. The armed forces would re-establish order, and then return power to the civilians.

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They would wipe out the subversives, but respect the rights of the others.

BY 1976, however, the military lived in a nightmarish world peopled by subversives. They pursued their own private dream: an Argentina free of terrorists. "A terrorist," General Jorge Videla explained, "is not just someone with a gun or a bomb, but also someone who spreads ideas contrary to Western civilization." The generals were ready to heed those who beseeched them to seize power, but they were also ready for more. They would rule Argentina for as long as they deemed necessary—just as their colleagues were doing in Chile, in Uruguay, in Brazil. It would be an exalting task, and a rewarding one: power also meant control of the national budget and of the state enterprises. Deserving civilians would be allowed to assist the military, but in a subordinate position.

There were similarities between the generals of Argentina and the Nazis of Germany. Not military ones, to be sure; in the Falklands War the Argentine officers proved to be craven and incompetent. Nor were there similarities in the virulence of their anti-Semitism: *Nunca Más* confirms that although prisoners were tortured more sadistically because they were Jewish, they were not arrested because they were Jewish. But some of Argentina's military actually admired the Nazis. And just as the Nazis needed the Jew to justify their *Weltanschauung*, so the Argentine officers needed the "terrorist" to justify their exercise of power. "If we exterminate them all, there will be fear for several generations," a navy officer said in mid-1976. Unlike Nazi Germany, however, the secret of Argentina's struggle against terrorism would be well protected: "Hitler lost the war, we will win." As a malignant growth, from the secret world of the clandestine jails, a sickness spread throughout the land: the "culture of fear." For it was common knowledge that the military was abducting people.

In the words of Amnesty International, the Argentine repression combined "centralized decision making and decentralized execution." Within the framework of the policy of disappearances established at the top, the planning and implementation were left to the regular chains of command of each of the three branches of the armed forces. Autonomous units (task forces) were created throughout the country.

Over half of the abductions, *Nunca Más* details, were staged in the homes of the victims. The captors came at night, generally in groups of five or six; sometimes there could be as many as 50. They were not discreet, these nocturnal visitors. They arrived in screeching cars, with banging doors. They might remain on the premises for two or three hours, beating the victim mercilessly in front of the family and looting the house. If a neighbor dared to call the police, the answer would always be the same: "The police were aware of what was going on, but could do nothing." For it was a military operation. Only later, when (and if) the family sought to find out the whereabouts of the detainee, did the wall of silence go up. The authorities had no record of any arrests; no one was being held in any jails; justice was unaware of his existence. A few of the detainees eventually reappeared alive. They had been released, or transferred to official jails. But they had very little to say, at least in public.

AS THIS black horror stalked the land, a feeling of complete vulnerability and abject fear crippled Argentine society. "Punishment," one Argentine has written, "arrived like the unfathomable act of a hidden God." Punishment meant not only a long jail sentence, but being sucked into a bottomless pit. There were those, notes *Nunca Más*, who tended "consciously or unconsciously, to justify this horror. 'There must be some reason for it,' they would whisper as though trying to propitiate awesome and inscrutable Gods, regarding the children and parents of the disappeared as plague-bearers." By avoiding any action that might provoke the military, they stood a very good chance of escaping the net. But who could be sure, who knew exactly which sins might trigger the ultimate punishment? In a country where the mere subject of disappearances was taboo, one might only guess. In fact, states *Nunca Más*:

> All sectors fell into the net: trade union leaders fighting for better wages; youngsters in student unions; journalists who did not support the regime; psychologists and sociologists simply for belonging to suspicious professions; young pacifists, nuns and priests who had taken the teachings of Christ to shanty areas; the friends of those people too, and the friends of friends, plus others whose names were given out of motives of personal revenge, or by the kidnapped under torture.

Through their policy of disappearances, the generals sought to avoid the kind of international condemnation provoked by the crude brutality of Pinochet's early repression. The open manner of many of the abductions would assure that the population would sense the truth and be cowed. People would know, but they would not dare to speak out. Then the generals would torture and kill—but discreetly.

This convenient fig leaf allowed the highly conservative Argentine Church to offer its Te Deums for the military regime. It allowed respectable foreign bankers to consort with the generals in good conscience. In the United States, some conservatives were eager to trust the generals. David Jordan, until recently the American ambassador in Peru, observed in an article in *Current History* that disappearances "[are] the work of paramilitary groups that are not under government control. . . . It is difficult to hold the government responsible for these activities when it repudiates them." Meanwhile skeptics were referred to the Argentine press, which was a model of self-censorship. True, international human rights organizations were lambasting the generals—but it was explained that they were infiltrated or duped by radicals.

ARGENTINA was Jimmy Carter's finest hour. Elsewhere—in El Salvador and the Philippines, for example—his human rights policy faded before anti-communist fears. In Argentina, he held firm. In bilateral meetings and in international forums, American officials confronted the generals, so sensitive to their image, with concrete evidence of their crimes. This rude, undiplomatic behavior stood in sharp contrast with the more sympathetic approach of the Soviet Union. Moscow overlooked human rights violations in Argentina, or explained them away as the work of paramilitary groups not under government control. Repeatedly Soviet officials came to the generals' defense against Carter. It was the Kremlin's cynical reward to the generals for their willingness to maintain diplomatic relations and develop economic ties.

Carter's efforts saved some lives, as the generals occasionally spared a few victims in exchange for a lessening of American pressure. But it was Ronald Reagan, not Jimmy Carter, who helped bring back democracy to Argentina. Without their debacle in the Falklands, the generals would not have relinquished power—

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not, at least, in the foreseeable future. And without Ronald Reagan in the White House, it is most unlikely that they would have dared to seize the islands. The Reagan administration, the generals expected, would pressure England to accept the fait accompli.

For the generals believed that as of January 1981 they had powerful friends in official Washington. They were no longer outcasts; they had been promoted by Reaganism to the more respectable category of authoritarian rulers, whose sins were compensated for by their anti-communist virtues. Instead of Carter's hostility, they were offered the blessings of yet another version of "constructive engagement." In Central America, moreover, Buenos Aires and Washington were becoming de facto allies in a joint crusade: support for the *contras* against Sandinista Nicaragua. (The *contras'* military leader, Enrique Bermudez, was an Argentine protégé before he became Washington's man.) But the generals' diplomacy was as poor as their military skills. Despite complaints, Reagan sided with Mrs. Thatcher while she lustily reasserted British colonial pride by force of arms. And on June 14, 1982, as the Argentine army surrendered at Port Stanley, the winds of democracy began to stir in Buenos Aires.

Argentina's fledgling democracy must now come to grips with "the greatest and most savage tragedy" in the country's history. Alone among the Latin American countries that have recently returned to a civilian government, Argentina has begun to punish a few military officers for their past crimes. "There can be no true reconciliation," *Nunca Más* warns, "until the guilty repent and we have justice based on truth." But with very minor exceptions, the guilty have shown no repentance whatsoever. A debate is now raging as to how far the process of justice can go without risking a military backlash. As *Nunca Más* makes clear, a large number of officers of every rank were directly involved in the abductions, tortures, and killings. Indeed, the Argentine officer corps finally deserves to be considered a criminal organization. Punishment is not only a matter of justice; it is indispensable for the long-term regeneration of Argentine society.

PIERO GLEIJESES

Piero Gleijeses is joint professor of American foreign policy and Latin American studies at Johns Hopkins University.

On the 30th anniversary of "Howl."

YOWL

For Jay McInerney

I

I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by stress
frazzled overtired burnt-out,
jogging through suburban streets at dawn
as suggested by the late James Fixx,
career-minded yupsters burning for an Amstel Light
watching Stupid Pet Tricks,
who upwardly mobile and designer'd and bright-eyed and high sat up
working in the track-lit glow of the Tribeca loft skimming
through the Day Timer while padding the expense account,
who passed through universities and saved their asses hallucinating Grateful
Dead posters and eating Sara Lee while watching the war on TV,
who were graduated and went on to law schools burning to save the world,
who brewed decaffinated coffee doing their yoga in alligator shirts and
listening to the latest Windham Hill Sampler,
who ate chocolate croissants in outdoor cafés and drank blush
wine on Columbus Avenue washed down with a little Percodan
with Dove bars with Diet Coke with Lean Cuisine,
stopping by on the way home for a pound of David's cookies
telling each other of their fears of intimacy and their need
for space and inability to commit—for now,
who watched Mary Tyler Moore reruns and wept for Rhoda and worried about
acid rain and the mercury in the swordfish while strung out on cyclamates
faces flushed with MSG even after specifically making a point of
mentioning to the waiter not to put it in,
who prowled through uncertain money markets chewing Tums and
doing lines with the Hispanics in the mail room
sitting in the gents with baby-laxative runs while the boss buzzes
and the secretary says you're on the phone to Bonn,
who stayed up too late working out their relationships 'n' things feeling
the gnawing rat-fear that they hadn't been communicating lately and
the urgent pounding screaming need to think about their priorities,
yacketayakking analyzing thinking it through making constructive
suggestions as the eastern sky flamed in raw Ralph Lauren pastels,
got to get away for a few days but the Hartmann luggage is being
repaired oh,
who needs this wandering through Needless-Markup wailing (inside) for
the baby seals and the bunnies slaughtered for lipstick
remembering all the unanswered anti-vivisection junk mail on the
way to the appliances section to beg another blade for the Cuisinart,
who subscribed to *Gourmet* and the *American Lawyer* and after an exhausting
search found Jamaica time-shares in the classifieds for only
$1200 a month coping as best they could with the Negro beach boys
wanting to sell them ganja,
paying outrageous sums for bottled water and having to complain
about the maid service and the warm orange juice knowing they should
have gone to Cape Cod instead where the Peugeot mopeds fart carbon
monoxide and the half-eaten lobster rolls rot in wax paper on the
sidewalks and the Republican men in lime-green corduroys with little
orange elephants bray as their wives buy overpriced scrimshaw,
who nudged and nuzzled over margaritas and dreamed of endless
throbbing hot sticky sex but Not tonite dear I have a yeast infection,
running on spongy Reeboks to sublimate their lust
then plunging into *Bright Lights, Big City*,
who upped their nightly hits of Valium from two to five mgs and
worried if they were going to be groggy in the morning,
who hollow-eyed and febrile read the theater reviews in unread
issues of the *New Yorker* yes the *New Yorker*,
who watched re-reruns of Mary Tyler Moore and decided they hated Rhoda,

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who skimmed the Banana Republic catalog with brain-dead gaze
wondering if they really needed Ethiopian saddlebags,
who padded back and forth to the john for endless glasses of water while
worrying about refinancing at ten and an eighth and waited for the
fiendish tweet of birds and the thud of the *Wall Street Journal*
on the porch,
who took a little tootsky after their Yoplait just to get going
and buzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzed along in the carpool
yattering to the gray-flannelled bottisatvas in the backseat
about rowing machines and Eddie Murphy's homo jokes,
ah Jay while you are not safe I am not safe and now *Ransom*
is remaindered at Waldenbooks and you're really in a bind—
and who therefore drown in butter-flavored popcorn at the Cineplex as the
answering machines cutely speak to strangers and Discover cards are
mailed to the incorrect addresses while Mohawked clerks at Tower
Records with little crucifixes in their ears play "Pillow Talk" and
everything you want they only have in Beta.

II

Yuck! Gross! Eeewww! Buying crack from the zombies in the
park! Closing out the trust fund! Checking into the rehab!

III

Jay McInerney! I'm with you at Area
where the shark swims on the wall
I'm with you David Letterman on the tower
where you drop watermelons and TVs and bowling balls
I'm with you Gary Hart in New Hampshire
where you stammer and yammer about New Ideas
I'm with you Don Johnson in Miami
where you don't wear socks
I'm with you Jerry Rubin on Wall Street
where you only hear yippie when the Dow hits a high
I'm with you Donald Trump on Fifth Avenue
where Steven Spielberg has an apartment in your building
I'm with you John McEnroe in England
where you appear on world television treating people like scum
I'm with you Maria Shriver in Hyannisport
where a wedding gift from Kurt Waldheim has arrived
I'm with you John Zaccaro at Middlebury
where you pursue independent study projects
I'm with you Doctor Ruth on cable
where you giggle with your guests about orgasm
I'm with you Ron Jr cavorting
in your underwear on national television
I'm with you Mike Deaver in Bitburg
where your mind was on buying a car
I'm with you Billy Crystal in too many places
where your routines have not aged well
I'm with you Brooke Shields at Princeton
where you—but who cares?
I'm with you on the Upper East Side
pricing modems
I'm with you on the Upper East Side
stopping into the Food Emporium for a quart of lo-fat milk
I'm with you on the Upper East Side
eating sushi and Ecstacy
I'm with you on the Upper East Side
looking for myself in *People* magazine

CHRISTOPHER BUCKLEY
PAUL SLANSKY
D.C.-L.A.-D.C. 1986

Christopher Buckley's most recent book is *The White House Mess*. Paul Slansky is writing a book about Ronald Reagan's political career.

CORRESPONDENCE, *from page 6*

WRITING WRONGS

To the editors:

Professor Kramer ("Don't Write," November 10) is due sympathy for his frustration in trying to avail senators of his views on tax revision. But there is more to this sad story than Robert S. McIntyre's article revealed.

Correspondence with Congress, though it may in some cases bring about useful constituent service, is generally aggrandizing for the officeholder. I quote *Congressional Quarterly* (July 21, 1979): "One way senators compile mailing lists is to collect the name and address of every person who writes to them. One advantage of this method is that senators can transfer to their campaign committees the names and addresses compiled in this manner."

Don't write, indeed—it only encourages them.

TIM W. FERGUSON
New York, New York

EXPERIENCE SHAKESPEARE

To the editors:

As one of the leading practitioners of "the new historicism," with its concern for "the re-embedding of poetry in its social and cultural situation," Stephen Greenblatt could hardly be expected to approve of a book that defends the assumption that Shakespeare's plays are to be enjoyed for their dramatic and poetic qualities ("As They Like It," November 10). But the common reader is quite happy to see that Northrop Frye is still defending "the autonomy of the literary" experience.

Most readers may have difficulty in defining the aesthetic experience. They know, however, that what makes us enjoy a play or novel is not its relation to something else, or its moral values (Christian, feminist, Marxist, etc.), but the arrangement of scenes, actions, and words that constitute its unique experience. The scholarly material is valuable only insofar as it enhances this primary experience. Can we really expect anyone to enjoy these plays because they reflect or subvert "systems of meaning ... encoded in a conception of the past," even one that is revealed by the "new historicism"?

LAWRENCE W. HYMAN
Ridgewood, New Jersey

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Laugh-In

COMEDY, STEVE MARTIN SAYS, is not pretty. Neither is the advancing decomposition of Reaganism. But you have to chuckle anyway. The presidential press conference has become the Gong Show. Our first contestant is the President of the United States doing his impression of Ron Ziegler: "The speculation [about dealings with Iran] . . . has no foundation." Gong! Pick up the *Washington Post* and you're reading *Mad* magazine with a prominent former administration policymaker seated in the Alfred E. Newman Chair of Political Philosophy. The official's column last Sunday was headlined "What Credibility Problem?" What me, worry?

TO SCORN THE REAGANITES is too tempting; to pity them, too charitable. So I'm trying to laugh. The newspaper these days is a sitcom grab bag. Richard Perle, one of Reagan's chief advisers on nuclear arms, was recently portrayed seated in a bathtub in Reykjavik trying to decide what to do with his rubber duckie and 10,000 nuclear missiles. There's the doleful Eugene Hasenfus, whose name might as well be Eugene Haplessness now that he has been abandoned by his employers—whoever they are. (One reporter jokes that the CIA has laid down the post-Hasenfus law to its Central American operatives: no more parachutes.) Then there's that cake in the shape of a key, gobbled down by adolescent Iranian airport guards before it could be delivered to those hungry Iranian "moderates." It's no surprise that the (literal) punch line "Kenneth, what is the frequency?" has become such a catchphrase. Dan Rather is not the only one being assaulted by strangers whose unknown actions are an absurd mystery. For the last couple of months, the American public has been getting the same treatment.

HERE'S ANOTHER NAME to remember: Luis Posada. He is a Cuban-American who spent eight years in jail in Venezuela for blowing up a Cuban airliner with 73 people aboard in 1976. Posada escaped from jail in 1984. The Sandinistas say they showed a picture of Posada to Hasenfus and that Hasenfus identified the man as his boss in the *contra* resupply network. Nobody in the *contra* movement has denied this, and several U.S. reporters have independently confirmed it. Nobody knows where Posada is, but when (or if) he resurfaces, he can enlighten us all on the old cliché "One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter."

I MET AN ACTRESS last week who told me that Washingtonians just don't know how to laugh. She runs an outfit called Acting for Professionals, and a spin-off Acting for Lawyers. Her most recent class of lawyers, she sighed, could emit only the most pathetic chortle when asked. No belly laughs, no cackles, not even a giggle or a chuckle. She tried to explain to her students that once you let a laugh go, there is something infectious about it, that the laughter just wells up from the very membranes of your cells, flows into muscles, ripples upward through the throat, and bursts out in meaningless pleasure. The lawyers looked at her with dull comprehension.

LAUGHING IS A TOUGH ASSIGNMENT in an era when "spin control" is not only a political ideal, but a psychological fact. For the uninitiated, "spin control" is what political types do to make sure they get good press coverage. They give out background information to reporters, flatter, cajole, and deceive them—all to make sure they give the story the desired interpretation. "Spin control" works the same way in the Washington psyche. It means putting exactly the right spin on your personal story to meet the prerequisites of people in power. But with your mental spin always controlled, it's very hard to smile at that man in the bathtub, much less at the whoppers the president tells at his press conferences.

MAYBE THE LATEST Washington rumor could elicit a guffaw from uptight lawyers: Pat Buchanan, the White House communications chief and defender of accused Nazi war criminals, is thinking of running for president in 1988. Maybe not.

MANY ARE NOW SAYING THAT the Reagan administration has betrayed its own principles and record by negotiating with terrorists for the release of hostages held in Lebanon. I think this is unfair. The administration's inclination to deal with terrorists was well-established long before the mission to Tehran. For example, on March 16, 1981, General Roberto Viola, leader of the military dictatorship of Argentina, was invited to the White House for a personal visit with President Reagan. Afterward Viola said the meeting "exceeded my most exaggerated hopes." Five of Viola's closest associates are now serving lengthy jail terms directing the program of state terrorism that took the lives of 9,000 Argentine civilians in the late 1970s. The Reagan administration, it is worth recalling, described Viola and his accomplices as "moderates."

DOZENS OF OTHERWISE HEALTHY and intelligent Americans are now clinically brain dead because they have overdosed on this word, "moderate." Moderation is the opiate of the centrists, and it is one of our most severe drug abuse problems. Among the victims are a famous columnist, several members of the Democratic Leadership Council, and scores of editorial writers across the country. While leading apparently normal lives, their brain waves are horizontal, only blipping slightly upward when Elliot Richardson gives a commencement address. A recent *Washington Post* editorial recommended restricting the use of this political narcotic. It was, I think, one of the most important indications of the polarization that will follow Reaganism.

MILAN KUNDERA SAYS in *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* that "things deprived suddenly of their putative meaning, the place assigned them in the ostensible order of things (a Moscow-trained Marxist who believes in horoscopes), make us laugh. Initially, therefore, laughter is the province of the Devil. It has a certain malice to it (things have turned out differently from the way they seem), but a certain beneficient relief as well (things are looser than they seemed, we have greater latitude in living with them, their gravity does not oppress us)." The administration deserves the malice, and the public deserves "beneficient relief." I think I'll sign up for a lesson in laughing.

J. M.

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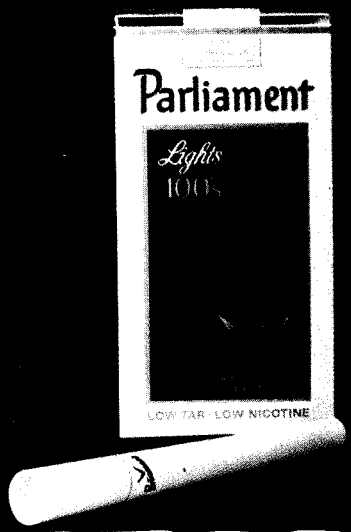

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